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The Black Cat

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THE BLACK CAT CLUB

ONE Black Cat story published during the year 1916 may claim a position of more or less permanence in our literature, according to the opinion of Mr. Edward J. O'Brien, the famous short story critic, who recently published in *The Boston Transcript* a study of the best short stories of the year. At first thought that statement doesn't hold forth much promise for THE BLACK CAT. But wait—

Only one hundred seventy-nine stories out of twenty-seven hundred published in seventy magazines during the year were admitted to this class of stories of permanent literary value. Fifty-two of these were by American writers and therefore entitled to places on Mr. O'Brien's "Roll of Honour." And of these, twenty attained the distinction of being selected for republication in his book, "The Best Stories of 1916."

Twenty stories out of twenty-seven hundred—and the story, "Half-Past Ten" by Alice L. Tildesley, published in THE BLACK CAT last August, was one of the twenty.

Mr. O'Brien explains the basis of his judgment. Let us quote from his article in *The Transcript*.

"No substance is of importance in fiction, unless it is organic substance. Inorganic fiction has been our curse in the past, and we are still surrounded by it in almost all of our magazines. The new impulse must find its own substance freshly, and interpret it naturally in new forms, rather than in the stereotyped utterances to which we have been so long accustomed.

During the past year I have read about twenty-seven hundred stories, and from this number I have sought to select those which have rendered life imaginatively in organic substance and artistic form. As the most adequate means to this end, to reaffirm my explanations of previous years, I have taken each short story by itself, and examined it impartially. I have done my best to surrender myself to the writer's point of view, and granting his choice of material and personal interpretation of its value, have sought to test it by the double standard of substance and form. Substance is something achieved by the artist in every act of creation, rather than something already present, and accordingly a fact or group of facts in a story only obtain substantial embodiment when the artist's power of compelling imaginative persuasion transforms them into a living truth. I assume that such a living truth is the artist's essential object. The first test of a short story, therefore, in any qualitative analysis is to report upon how vitally compelling the writer makes his selected facts or incidents. This test may be known as the test of substance.

But a second test is necessary in this qualitative analysis if a story is to take high rank above other stories. The test of organic substance is the most vital test, to be sure, and if a story survives it, it has imaginative life. The true artist, however, will seek to shape this living substance into the most beautiful and satisfying form, by skillful selection and arrangement of his material, and by the most direct and appealing presentation of it in portrayal and characterization."

The stories considered fall into four groups. The first consists of stories which fail, in his opinion, to survive either the test of substance or the test of form, and are therefore set aside completely. The second group consists of those stories which may fairly claim to survive either of these tests. The third group includes the stories which survive both tests and may therefore lay claim to a second reading. The final group (179) includes the stories which possess "the distinction of uniting genuine substance and artistic form in a closely woven pattern, with a spiritual sincerety so earnest and a creative belief so strong, that each of these may claim a position of some permanence in our literature as a criticism of life."

In an article in the February *Bookman*, reviewing the fifty best stories of the year, Mr. O'Brien says: "'Half-Past Ten' is a grim and mordant study etched almost too

(*Continued on page* 45)

SHAD'S WINDFALL

BY RAMSEY BENSON

Here we have a man to whom a little learning was not a dangerous thing so long as the sum total of his book knowledge was a single verse of the Bible. More learning than that would have been hazardous. It probably would have dislodged something highly essential to this story.

OF Shad Hackenschmidt the saying went, more or less confidentially, that he didn't know anything, but this wasn't so, anyway, not strictly. Shad knew a verse of the Scriptures. He couldn't read and he couldn't write, but he had somehow learned that verse. He could repeat it glibly and he took care not to forget it. Every now and then he rehearsed it to Dony, his wife.

Dony, on her part, couldn't see the use of it. "I wouldn't lumber up my mind with the junk!" she declared, not so much in disparagement of the Holy Writ as by way of expressing her very practical turn. Dony had a passion for the practical.

"You'll see different some day," Shad maintained, stoutly. "It's into the Bible just that way and nothin' that's into the Bible is junk. You'll see different some day."

She didn't insist. She had great influence over her man—so great that he brought every penny he earned home for her to spend and, if she had cared to be exacting about trifles, she might have prevailed upon him to let the verse of Scripture fade out of his memory, but she chose not to push her influence so far. She wasn't thought to know much either, but she had sense enough not to nag.

The pennies that Shad earned and brought home to her weren't many, for his employment was of the lowliest and precarious at that. Probably he didn't average much over a dollar a day, year's end to year's end, yet such prodigies of economy did Dony achieve in her management of the household that they had their little home paid for, with land enough to make a garden spot considerably larger than a postage stamp. Of course they lived far out, almost beyond the suburbs, but they were both strong and didn't mind walking. Besides owning their home, they had best clothes for Sunday, and every week they spared ten cents for frivolity.

In winter the movies got the dime and, by way of return, afforded the pair something to talk about through the week—something romantic, or ludicrous, or instructive, as it might be, but always this served as a bit of leaven to lighten the daily grind. But though the movies gave them back good measure, the Hackenschmidts liked the summers best. Every Sunday in summer they walked three miles to Powder Horn Park and watched the boys play baseball. There were a dozen diamonds laid out at the park and every diamond had its own game, so that there was never any lack of sport. Shad was a terrific fan. He howled himself hoarse, cheered the fine plays, berated the umpire to the queen's taste and enjoyed himself immensely. Dony was no fan, but she had great fun, too, watching the shopgirls to see how they had their frocks made. There were always shoals of shopgirls at Powder Horn Park of a Sunday.

But the dime: Regularly at three o'clock Shad would turn to Dony and ask her if she wouldn't like something cold to drink, and Dony would answer that she didn't mind. After these preliminaries they repaired to a convenient stand and had pop or ginger ale or ice-cream.

As they sat over their refreshment, Shad was often prompted to hint darkly of his past, what a sporty fellow he had been in his day. "Many's the time," he related, "I've went into a poolroom with my week's

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wad and come out broke in less than an hour. The ponies sure almost got me."

Dony worried mildly about the ponies. She pretended not to care, but in her heart she was just a little troubled. What if the ponies were to get Shad yet? Was so strong a passion ever definitely rooted out?

"I sure used to be some sport!" Shad confessed, not once, but repeatedly.

August the 3rd, 1916, began about like any other day. Shad and Dony had to be up with the sun, even in summer, and it wasn't yet six o'clock when Shad trudged away to his work. Dony stood on the front stoop, which was going to be a porch with pillars as soon as they could spare the money, and watched her man till he was lost to sight at the bend of the road. That is, intermittently—she watched him when she wasn't counting the buds on the pink rose beside the door, or digging about the lily-of-the-valley, which was five years old and had never blossomed.

Neither Dony nor Shad had an inkling that a red-letter day had dawned for them.

The Grand Circuit had come and gone, the ball team was playing away from home and Bissell, the sports' reporter, found time hanging heavily on his hands; likewise, Kilgore, the politics' reporter. It was August, the campaign wouldn't open for a month yet and Kilgore's occupation was, for the moment, in the nature of Othello's, that is to say, gone.

They read a little and wrote a little and yawned a great deal. Then, all of a sudden, Bissell brought his feet down from his desk with a crash and sat up straight, with an animated air.

"Just to start something, I'll tell you what I'll do," said he. "I'll bet you ten dollars I'm the only person under this roof who can name the Twelve Apostles right off the reel."

Kilgore laughed scornfully. "How do I know you can name them? The chances are you can't," he objected.

"Well, if I can't, the coin's yours," Bissell replied. "Do you take me?"

Kilgore stifled another yawn. "I like money, but I don't like it well enough to rob the baby's bank in order to get it."

"Don't worry about the baby's bank. That's my lookout. I'm making the bet and I'm satisfied with the odds. If it looks like easy money to you, why, go to it. If you can find anywhere under this roof a man, woman or child, other than myself, regardless of color and previous condition of servitude and inclusive of Indians not taxed, who can name the Twelve Apostles right off the reel, then my sawbuck is yours. Otherwise, your sawbuck is mine. Do you take me?"

"Since you insist—yes. Of course when a fool starts in to get himself parted from his money there's no earthly use trying to break up his formations."

"Very well, then. It's up to you. Bring on your man, or woman, or child."

George Washington Peak, the religious reporter, had company in his office that day and the first of it was Doctor Pompton of the Church of the Heavenly Rest. Doctor Pompton called, by his own avowal, to pay his respects, and George Washington Peak was flattered and flustered. Religious reporting wasn't his call; he expected to stay with it only until he should earn money enough to take him through the divinity school and into holy orders, and such being his outlook, the respects of a personage of Doctor Pompton's standing bulked big. To have them paid to him was an event. The rector of the Church of the Heavenly Rest, as you may or may not know, preached the most brilliant sermons that ever found their way into the Monday morning papers, and more than once, when the House of Bishops were considering candidates for the Episcopal dignity, his name had stood well up in the lists.

But Doctor Pompton was scarcely seated when still other company, to exemplify the old saying that it never rains but it pours, hove in sight, and company, too, of a character that caused George Washington Peak to be more flustered than ever. Why should Bissell, the sports' man, and Kilgore, the politics' man, both of whom he counted in the service of the Mammon of Unrighteousness, choose that inopportune moment to present themselves?

They weren't abashed, either, but greeted Doctor Pompton with easy familiarity, as if he were a mere politician, or a sport of some sort. Doctor Pompton, however, could be all things to all men, according to the apostolic injunction, and met them graciously.

Greetings over, Kilgore turned to Bissell. "Of course," said he, "you didn't know the doctor was in the building when you made the bet. I will release you, if you like."

"No," said Bissell, "I stand pat."

Whereupon, to George Washington Peak's consternation, Kilgore proceeded to explain their unholy compact. "We are in search," he wound up, "of a person who can name the Twelve Apostles."

"Right off the reel!" stipulated Bissell, airly, and George Washington Peak shivered.

Doctor Pompton relaxed good-humoredly. "Let me see," quoth he. "Peter—and Paul—and—er—Judas Iscariot—"

"Was Paul one of the Twelve?" queried Bissell, in a manner of challenge, which caused George Washington Peak to squirm.

"Ha, ha! No, indeed,—now I think of it. Certainly not," confessed Doctor Pompton, and his good humor seemed just a trifle dashed. "Well, well—how things do slip away. Where one doesn't especially charge one's memory, you know. The Twelve Apostles, with the exception of the two I mention, do not stand out in the Scriptural narrative—that is, by name, you know. With few exceptions, even a close student of the Bible doesn't find himself remembering their names, unless he makes an especial effort to do so."

Kilgore's face registered dismay. "Peak, old man, can't you save my bacon? I've been depending on you."

Peak went red to the roots of his hair. "I'm afraid—that is—you'll have to excuse me!" he stammered.

Kilgore threw up his hands. "All is lost save honor!" he exclaimed, and started for the door. "Pardon us if we take our departure somewhat abruptly. Art is long, life is short, money is scarce and we must be about our quest, for the night cometh," he called back over his shoulder. But to Bissell outside he confided: "If I didn't know any more about politics than they know about religion, I'd resign in favor of the printer's diabolus."

"Speak of angels and you hear the rustle—here's your diabolus now," said Bissell.

A smutty youth with a bunch of fluttering proofs in his hand clattered down the stairs and him Kilgore hailed: "Prithee, fair sir, canst thou name us the Twelve Apostles, right off the reel?"

The boy halted and regarded them uncertainly. He scented some sort of a joke and no doubt he had reason by past experiences, but he chose to take the inquiry seriously. "There's more'n twelve Apostles," he made answer. "The limit's twenty-one men in the league. It useter be sixteen, but they raised it to twenty-one. I don't guess I could name 'em. I might name the Giants, or the Sox, most of 'em, but I'd have to look up the Apostles. Marty O'Toole was an Apostle, when the Pirates bought him for $22,500. He's back in the bush now."

Bissell laughed gleefully. Kilgore registered pain. "To what, fair sir," he asked, "dost fancy we allude?"

"The St. Paul team in the 'Merican 'Sociation,—that's the only Apostles I know about."

"No, something quite different," sighed Kilgore, and with that they suffered the boy to go his way while they went theirs.

In the room next to George Washington Peak's, Miss Dewars busied herself with the odds and ends that made up the society department. She was the society reporter, in other words. She gave Bissell and Kilgore an unfriendly look as they darkened her doorway. "Don't bother me—I'm into it clear up to my neck!" she snapped.

"O woman, in our hours of ease, uncertain, coy and hard to please," quoted Kilgore. "Pray—"

"That will be about all for you!"

"No—listen! If you can name the Twelve Apostles right off the reel, there'll be ten dollars in it for me, and in consideration of your assistance I'm willing to split the rake-off. Or are you like the great Agassiz, who had no time to be making money?"

"Fiddlesticks!"

"No, Apostles—the Twelve Apostles.

Not the Patronesses of the *Bal Poudre*, understand, nor yet Herbert Spencer's definition of evolution. These are important in their way, I grant you, but in a great emergency—"

"I don't know a thing about it. Please go away!"

"All joking aside, the parliament of religions in the next room have named three Apostles, one of whom isn't an Apostle, making a net gain of two, or one-sixth of the whole. Can you not find somewhere in your store of knowledge another Apostle or so?"

"I can not and if you don't go away—"

They left Miss Dewars to her odds and ends. "Understand me, Bissell!" Kilgore protested, as they passed out. "I'm not mercenary. I don't mind the loss of the money. I confess that my motives were sordid at first, but they're not so any more. It's the humiliation that burns like a red-hot iron. I never was so humiliated in my life—never!"

They tramped upstairs and they tramped down. They asked the printers on the top floor and pressmen in the basement. They bearded the editor in his den and the general manager in his lair. Solicitors of advertising, clerks in the circulation department; none were passed by. But all to no avail. Once it seemed as if the cashier might come across. He was a Scotch Presbyterian by the name of Mackintosh. He had studied the Bible as a pious layman all his life and he was reluctant to own himself ignorant of something he ought to know. He kept them with him the better part of half an hour while he ransacked his memory. He recalled Peter and Judas Iscariot and he didn't make the mistake of including Paul among the Twelve, but he had to give up at last.

Kilgore was disheartened. "Is there anywhere under the roof we haven't been? If not, we may as well settle the bet. I don't believe I shall ever recover. Another such a disillusionment and I shouldn't much care whether I lived or died."

"We didn't go down in the depths where the boilers are. Perhaps there's a learned stoker in the bunch," suggested Bissell. "It is given to the lowly to understand these things, you know, rather than the great and wise."

"Very well,—we'll go down where the boilers are. My bosom is devoid of hope, but I will not have it flung at me by posterity that I left any stone unturned or any blockhead unvisited."

Where land is worth so much that a layer of gold pieces spread all over it will no more than suffice to pay for it, curious things come to pass. The economy of space is the first consideration and in the distribution thereof it is given to him who hath and taken away from him who hath not. The editor's den was large and airy and so was the general manager's lair, for these were a part of the front which the establishment presented to the world, and front was a consideration hardly secondary, but the boilers were tucked away under the sidewalk and so cribbed, cabined and confined, that there wasn't room to install machinery wherewith to lift out the ashes. Tons of ashes had to come up out of there, in the course of a year, and they were brought up in sacks, on men's backs.

Of course that was a crude way in an age more anxious to save labor than to save its soul but, after all, the waste was more apparent than real. Always there was cheap help to be had—men unfit for any but the coarsest and commonest employment, but who had their living to earn and were glad of any sort of an odd job, no matter how hard and dirty. The job of bringing up those ashes was hard enough and dirty enough, but men to undertake it were never wanting and their pay was scarcely more than the interest would be on the cost of machinery to take their place.

A dark and narrow stairway that was little better than a ladder, plunged abruptly down into the pit where the boilers seethed and sputtered. A blistering heat rose up and smote Bissell and Kilgore in the face. A man was climbing the stairs with a sack of ashes on his back and they stood aside to let him pass. He had the aspect of a lost soul bending to his task of penance in purgatory. The sweat poured off his face, tracking runs and rivulets in the grime that had gathered there. The sack was a coarse burlap and the ashes sifted plenti-

fully through. They settled on his face and powdered his wet hair.

"Was he under the roof when we made the bet?" whispered Kilgore hoarsely.

"Granted that he was!" Bissell whispered back.

Kilgore addressed himself to the mounting figure. The hiss and sputter of the boilers filled the place with sound and he lifted his voice. "My friend," he shouted, "one moment!"

The man's head was bowed under his burden and he rolled up his eyes to see who had spoken. But he didn't answer and he didn't stop.

"One moment, please!" Kilgore repeated, and touched his arm.

The man straightened at that, balancing the sack deftly. He had a pleasant face, in spite of the grime, and he betrayed not the least annoyance, though he was being put to no small inconvenience.

Kilgore lost no time beating about the bush: "Can you name the Twelve Apostles right off the reel?"

The man didn't hear. "Which?" he asked, and bent nearer.

"The Twelve Apostles!" roared Kilgore. "Can you name them—right off the reel?"

The man brightened. He glowed, in fact. His head came up proudly. "I can!" quoth he, and thereupon, without further prompting, he proceeded to do so, sonorously:

"Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, John the son of Zebedee and James his brother, Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew, the publican, James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus who was also called Thaddeus, Simon the Canaanite and Judas Iscariot who also betrayed him."

Kilgore confronted Bissell. "Is that right?" he inquired, and Bissell answered that it was. "The money is yours!" he admitted, and handed him a ten dollar bill.

Kilgore snatched the money and thrust it into the ashman's sweaty hand. "It's yours!" he cried. "You've saved the day, my bacon, the honor of the house and other things only less important;—take it!"

They were a singular company, down there in the hot, murky cellar,—the astonished ashman with the sack on his shoulder, Bissell regarding him incredulously, Kilgore fairly dancing for joy. It was Bissell who spoke next. "Why not give him the whole pot?" he demanded.

"Sure thing—the whole pot goes!" Kilgore assented, and fished another ten out of his own pocket and thrust it into the ashman's hand.

The Hackenschmidts lived too far out to have a number for their house and they felt the want of it. "What if somebody was to write us a letter—how would they send it?" protested Shad, and while Dony hadn't much fear of a difficulty like that arising, she wanted the house numbered. "I've always lived in a house with a number till now; it don't seem civilized without," she declared.

Tin figures finished in brass or antique copper could be had at the 5 and 10 cent stores at the rate of three for a quarter, but they didn't fancy tin figures. What they wanted were figures of solid metal that stood out in a substantial manner and they wanted them nickeled, so they wouldn't tarnish. Figures like that cost a quarter apiece and they couldn't think of having less than four. The last number they passed when coming out from town had four figures and that was a mile away. Sometimes they talked about five. That would break into another dollar and it was certainly more than they could afford but, nevertheless, they talked of having five figures. One advantage at least they had in living so far out—there was nobody to tell them how many figures they should have, or what these figures should be.

They favored eights. An eight had a fat, rich look, in comparison with the other figures.

Shad worked till six o'clock at night and that meant a late supper, but the days are long in August. In their latitude the sun didn't set till about half past seven, on the third of the month, and there was considerable daylight after he got home. Dony didn't hear him come;—the first she heard he was knocking with a hammer out in front.

She rushed out. "Shad Hachenschmidt, what are you about?" she demanded.

But she didn't need to ask; she could see for herself. He had two figures already nailed up,—two corpulent, glittering eights. He didn't answer until he had finished—he didn't say a word or even vouchsafe her a glance until he had three more eights nailed up,—five in all.

Shad had brought a box to stand on. He now climbed down and withdrew to a distance. "Some class to that!" he remarked, with great satisfaction.

But Dony was troubled. She thought of the cost. Their finances, as she knew them, were in no condition to stand any such strain. She intimated as much and Shad's answer was to dig out of the pocket of his overalls a ten dollar bill, a five dollar bill, three silver dollars, two halves and a quarter. It was the most money she had ever seen in his hands and she trembled at the sight.

"Oh, Shad!" she cried. "Have you been playing the ponies?"

Shad laughed uneasily. "No," he replied. "There ain't no ponies to play any more."

"Then how did you get that money, Shad Hackenschmidt? Tell me how you got that money!"

Shad sat down on the stoop and fingered the bills and the coins in a perplexed manner. "Dony, I'll own up—I don't rightly know myself. I was bringin' up ashes out of a basement boiler-room an' two fellers stops me, right on the ladder. 'Can you name the Twelve Apostles?' says one of them. 'I can,' says I, it bein' the verse of Scripture I know an' you've heard me say it many's the time. 'I can,' says I, and I goes on to name 'em: 'Simon who was called Peter and Andrew his brother, John the son of Zebedee and James his brother, Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew the publican, James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus who was also called Thaddeus, Simon the Canaanite and Judas Iscariot who also betrayed him.' Just like that, an' what does the feller do but shove a ten into my hand an' then the other feller speaks up an' says, 'Why not give him the whole pot?' an' he shoves another ten into my hand and afore I can say Jack Robberson or ask 'em why, they gets out an' I don't see 'em no more. It's all on account of the verse bein' into the Bible, near's I can make out. I know'd all the while it would help some day, that's why I didn't never forget it."

Dony took the money and there was an awe upon her. Shad gazed up at the row of figures over the door, cocking his head in the manner of an expert judging a work of art. "Some class to that!" he insisted. But Dony didn't say a word. Her awe forbade her.

In any Federal building, a flaming lithograph will flash unsolicited advice in this manner: "Join the Navy and See the World!" But that same lithograph will have nothing whatever to say about the Coy Canuck who lost the rating badge of a petty officer because he overstayed his shore leave fifteen minutes in order to put down a revolution. You will have to read THE CORPSE DELICIOUS in the April BLACK CAT to get that story.

THEIR PIECE OF ART

BY LOUIS SCHNEIDER

To be constructed in a good, substantial and workmanlike manner, it is obvious that a bridge must be completed down to the last rivet. In this case we have a bridge that was not only completed, but had something not called for in the plans and specifications.

THIS is the last day of the year and, until a late hour last night, I was as much in the dark as the rest of the world regarding the disappearance of both Mark Bredon and Andrew Furbush, although I was quite familiar with all the incidents leading up to them, and although, as I now know, the disappearances took place almost under my very eyes.

It is now more than seven months since Furbush, who was the last to go, dropped from human sight. Bredon, as is well known, was last seen almost eight weeks before. We were at that time at work on the first pier of the Kellmouth bridge, which colossal structure, so masterfully planned and expeditiously finished, I am content to have stand as a fitting and lasting monument not only to their ability as engineers, but to the men themselves, although it was I who, in the main, put the work through. But the Kellmouth bridge, in the finishing of which I took such pride after their disappearances, I shall never again willingly or knowingly cross.

I had been with Furbush & Bredon nearly thirty years when the problem of constructing the Kellmouth bridge was broached to us. I had risen steadily in their employ until I had attained the position of general superintendent. So, as may be evident, I knew the men well, even intimately. I neither overestimate their ability as engineers, nor condone their failings. That there were bickerings and quarrels between the two is no secret; but it must be granted by all that where action was essential or paramount, their method of attacking the problem in hand was efficiency itself. The stories about them, which this disclosure of mine will renew, will be enough evidence on the one point, and their works will be the only corroborative voice required on the other.

The mechanical minds of the two worked together as smoothly, certainly, and perfectly, as the parts of a marvellous machine. Men of their positive qualities and temperaments could not work together long without friction, any more than a machine can, but in their case the friction possessed a certain dynamic quality. Many a man among their competitors can vouch for the fact that they took contracts at what were judged to be ruinous figures, quarrelled incessantly as to details of buying and construction, yet they never lost money on a project. Indeed, they scarcely ever failed to win bonuses offered for work finished in less than contract time.

I had heard strange stories of how the two had come to strike hands in the engineering field after having acquired a not uncertain standing by their individual endeavors, but in spite of these current tales and the friction that existed between them, their activities promised to go on until the far-held Reaper should dissolve the partnership. So matters stood when a crushing blow fell upon Furbush.

The keen mechanical perception of the man was not impaired, but the moral side of him seemed to suffer a corroding attack when his wife and three children were lost in the tragic sinking of the *Orthovic* in mid-Atlantic. He had ever been a brusque, sharp man, and matters came to such a pass after the tragedy that, when the pressure of their business did not imperatively demand their presence, Bredon and Furbush grew into the habit of keeping away from the work for weeks at a time.

So things stood when the promoters of the Kellmouth project came to us with their problem. I spent a strenuous pair of days in locating Bredon and Furbush, both of whom, unfortunately, were away and not easily found. Both,—Furbush, particularly,—held an attitude of scant sufferance of the other's presence until I placed the matter of the bridge before them, which, as may well be believed, I speedily did. At once their animosities disappeared in the heat of constructive creation.

The bridge is the greatest in the world,—the deepest foundations, the heaviest piers, the longest spans, the boldest design. As the structure grew in their minds, detail by detail, so it stands today—substantially. Nights were almost as days with them as long as the plans lacked anything of being a perfect whole. Their capacity for going without rest, sleep, and meals, was almost unbelievable. My protests and cautions as to a less nerve-racking pace went unheeded. If I were to say that they threw themselves into the work it would appear to be, in the light of subsequent events, a deliberate and inexcusable play upon words. Let it be enough to say that the immediate effect of their exhaustive efforts was that as soon as the plans were finished to the minutest details, and the inevitable reaction set in, they seemed more bitter toward each other than before.

Both had the common good sense to virtually drop out of sight, though they kept in touch with the actual work through me.

As indicating a common peculiarity of the two I may say that in the providing of the enormous quantities of materials required in the construction work they often ordered me to do things which, had I been left to my own judgment, I should never have done. Where it was possible, and by any margin financially safe, they had always contracted with old friends for materials when they knew that those friends were in need of business, even though they might have been able to purchase materials of an identical quality at a lower figure elsewhere. It was at this point in their relations that the dangerous situation developed.

We sunk the huge caisson on the right bank of the Kell through the quicksand to bedrock in record time, with an occasional visit from either Bredon or Furbush. Never since the beginning of the work had they met. Bredon came quietly and went quietly. Though he was a man of strong and sturdy build, he was on the order of a gray ghost of whose coming and going we were scarcely aware. Furbush came less often but, though a silent mood was now on him, his presence made itself felt like a fall in temperature. The grim set of the jaw under his closely cropped gray beard and the narrowness of the pupils of his blood-shot eyes were disquieting. To see him stalking about with his great shoulders hunched forward and his hands gripped hard behind him, one wouldn't care to incur his enmity.

Then, with the caisson finally cleared of sand, and the work of filling it with concrete well begun, they met. It was early morning. Bredon had come into the camp the previous evening and had stayed the night with me. He and I had risen when the camp was barely astir, and stood on the scaffolding at the caisson's edge, peering into its huge well, which soon would be filled with the artificial stone which the derricks that loomed about us would lower and place quietly in the seepage at its bottom.

"Will Wastrow, do you think, be able to deliver the cement as quickly as we need it, in addition to keeping up with his other orders?" I asked of Bredon. Wastrow was the man who had the contract for the furnishing of the cement.

Bredon nodded. "He has never failed us," was his reply.

"Considering that he's getting two cents a barrel above the closest price, and the amounts these holes will swallow, you may be sure he'll do it," bit a voice at our heels.

It was Furbush. He had come up behind us in the dawn without being heard. His hands were laced at his back, and his shoulders and jaw had a more bellicose thrust than ever. His eyes were fixed on Bredon.

"Andrew," said I, to the point, and striving to keep him from pursuing the matter farther, as was my wont when

matters came to such a pass as this, "though you left it to the two of us to decide whether we should use Wastrow's cement, you gave me to understand, plainly, that you would not look unfavorably on the awarding of the contract to your old friend, even though his figure was somewhat in advance of the other bids."

He ignored me completely. "Since when have we become a philanthropic institution for the relief of broken-down hangers-on?" he demanded of Bredon.

"I'll make good your share of the difference, if you are not satisfied," said the other quietly.

"And if it's rotten cement?" gritted Furbush. "How are you going to make good my loss of prestige if this, the biggest bridge engineering feat of all time, goes to pieces, eh?"

"Every shipment has stood the most rigid tests, and has come out with a big margin to spare," I put in.

"Oh, it might make a vault that would hold him in, dead or alive," sneered Furbush, "but as for this purpose—"

"I believe," offered Bredon, in a level voice, but it was evident that he found it hard to hold himself in, "I believe that in all that we have ever done together I have been able to hold up my end of it, Andrew. Should I, do you think, fail at this late day—even if I were solely responsible for the work?"

"Held up your end of it, did you—even to this?" Furbush whipped out as he stepped forward a pace and thrust a gnarled fist before Bredon's face. "Do you remember how, thirty odd years ago, that fist taught you enough respect for me to make you come into the business with me, Mark Bredon? And do you think it now lacks the power to renew that respect?"

"It wasn't your fist," Bredon gave back boldly, "it was your ability. In spite of the words that have passed between us, time has proved the soundness of my judgment of those days, which told me that, however much we might differ on some things, we needed each other to reach the top in our field. I weighed your brain; damn your fist!"

Furbush threw back his head and an ugly, jeering laugh came from his bearded throat. What else they may have said, or exactly what followed, I do not know. A cry rose from out in the camp just then and I turned. A tongue of crackling flame played along the side of one of the laborers' little houses. Calling for Furbush and Bredon to follow, I ran for the nearest ladder.

When the blaze had been extinguished I did not for a time think of Furbush or Bredon. But when the morning meal was ready, I remembered and went to look for them. At first I did not think to look upon the scaffolding, but when I did I saw Furbush walking up and down near where I had left them. I called to him, but he did not seem to hear. Finally I went up.

"Where is Mark?" I asked.

He unclasped his hands from behind him and threw them out in a stiff, forced gesture. He seemed sobered and a bit dazed.

"Time for breakfast," I reminded him.

He continued his pacing for a time. "This time it is he who is gone," he said.

"Gone? Who?"

"Mark. I have,—" his voice husked and broke,—"I have done him—done him an irreparable injury."

"You have learned much in your life," I flared, "but you have never learned to curb your tongue."

"My tongue!" He brought his right hand again in front of him and fixed a strange look upon it,—the look one would fix upon a loathsome snake or a deadly weapon. I saw then that the knuckles were broken and bleeding. "Twice in our lives I used them on him. The first time I—I thought I won him with them. And now—and now—"

I could find nothing to say and, after a moment, without a look at me, he walked to the ladder, made his way down, and so out of camp.

We did not see him again for nearly a month. By that time we had filled the caisson to far above the level of the first scaffolding and were building quickly toward the cap. He had little to say. To walk close about the pier,—to lean with a hand against its huge, cold, curved side seemed to be sufficient.

"When will you be down with the caisson on the other bank, and begin filling?" was the only question he asked me.

I told him what my estimate was, and that we were gaining on our contract time.

"Yes, I know you," he replied. "That means that you will win a day or two between now and then."

"We may," I smiled.

He nodded. "I will watch," he said, in a low, slow voice.

"Have you heard from Mark?" I asked.

He did not even trouble to shake his head. I might have known, for I knew Mark Bredon.

"This—this is our last job together," he whispered presently, leaning heavily against the pier. "We'll never work together again on anything less than this—our greatest achievement. I'd rather have that said of me, John, than that we had broken and done anything smaller because of the break."

I tried to cheer him by saying that since it had been proved that their immaterial differences could not be settled by recourse to physical force, they might resume relations on a truly lasting and amicable footing. I further declared that already I sensed a wonderful change in him.

"Do you? Do you know, I have been thinking of what he said that last morning. We seemed habitually to take opposite ends of everything that came up, but it was as he said: He was always able to hold up his end of whatever was put upon him." He gazed slowly upward and outward as though his mind's eye followed the spans of that huge structure which Bredon had helped design and forward. "I've been wondering lately if he wasn't always a bit ahead of me, at that."

I looked into his wide eyes, now so changed from what they had been a few weeks before, and found myself unable to say anything.

"I have always been restless and impatient of tongue and arm," he continued, with a display of emotion which almost beat down the barrier of my unwilling, fear-bitten silence, to fling me into loosing a flood of protest against a menace of which I had no tangible evidence, "but you'll know the day when I shall hold up my end of our work as quietly and surely as he holds up his. Until then—until then—John Carnoby, good bye!"

As once before, he strode to a ladder, descended, and so out of camp, walking slowly and more slowly, as though it were against his will to go. Yet he went, and I never saw him again.

He did not wholly disappear at the time. Reports came to me later that he had been seen at various places,—always silent, solitary, brooding. I heard of him, too, through some of the clerks at our home offices, one of whom even said that he had seen Furbush seated before my open desk. Of this latter I could then find no evidence. Finally no more was heard of him, although the last place where he was seen was not far from the mouth of Kell, at about the time when we were finishing the first pier.

Months passed. The pier on the left bank of Kell rose to the level of that on the right. The spans of the bridge proper crept steadily out to fasten their steel-riveted grips upon each other. The bridge finally stood completed—the wonder of a world. And yet neither of the builders of Kellmouth bridge came near their creation, as far as any man had knowledge.

Others made search for Andrew Furbush and Mark Bredon, but not I. I knew that wherever they were there was still an unbreakable bond between them, and I felt that in good time I should have word of their whereabouts and state. And I was not mistaken.

Last night as I tore the next to the last leaf from the daily memorandum pad which lies on my desk, making ready for the last day of the year, a few lines of jerky writing on the final leaf caught my eye. I knew it instantly for that of Andrew Furbush.

I drew it to me and read:

John Carnoby:

Mark Bredon lies imbedded at about the five-foot level of the right pier of the Kellmouth Bridge. Poor devil!—it will be so heavy! so heavy! Can I do less than hold up the other end of it with him?

That was all. It was enough.

THE CHINK

BY RAYMOND RICHARDS

It was the boast of Lo Kiang that when he had grown fat and prosperous in America he would return to China to laugh at Foo Gan, tradesman of Shinchau. Years later, the two friends met in a dingy little San Francisco restaurant.

LO KIANG, son of Heung, bade an unemotional farewell to his wife and two-year-old son at a time when the lemon-colored fog of dawn lay on the millet fields and spread in a gaudy blanket up the slopes almost to the summit of Hangshan. He would send gold to her, he said, from the rich country to which he was going, and she, with the advice of Shan Fuh, his friend, was to make of the son a great man. Then Lo Kiang set forth, on foot, and came by evening to the home of Foo Gan, sweets tradesman of Shinchau, twenty miles to the east.

At dusk, with the squalid little town at their backs breathlessly awaiting the coming of night, they sat cross-legged on mats before Foo Gan's hut while far pagoda gongs throbbed through the dead air and peace lay heavily on the world. It was Foo Gan who broke the silence, looking at his guest through half shut eyes as he drew smoke through the stem of his tiny bowled pipe.

"And when you have arrived," he asked, "what then?"

"Then," replied Lo Kiang lightly, "I will grow rich and fat so that I may come back and laugh at you."

Foo Gau smiled soberly.

"In another year but one," he said, "I shall go to Shanghai. Business prospers and I have dealings there with Lung Tein, of the Le'i Ling shops. Presently, I, too, shall go to this white man's land, but I shall travel as a mandarin travels—in luxury."

"And I shall greet you in like style," returned Lo Kiang, a trifle nettled at the implication in the other's words. Foo Gan replenished his pipe with a pinch of shredded tobacco and began impressively:

"Five years ago Lu Keen departed Shanghai for the country to which you go now. He died at the hands of a mongrel tong in a strange city. Cuen Po started across the sea six years ago. He died of a plague on the ship. Then Ta 'Sien—"

Lo Kiang gestured impatiently.

"Those," he said contemptuously, "are of another caste. I am a Heung, and Heungs do not fail."

"But of your wife and son?"

Lo Kiang did not reply at once.

"The woman regrets not my going," he said finally. "I left her much cash. The boy I left with her and with Shan Fuh—my friend at Yungsui. The woman will care for him because he is her son—my friend because he is my son."

"And yet," said Foo Gan meditatively, "they speak little good of Shan Fuh."

"They lie. By the jade Buddha of Chingu he has sworn. I do not doubt."

Foo Gan deftly changed the subject, and until darkness descended the two friends talked of other things.

Refreshed by ten hours of unbroken sleep, Lo Kiang continued his journey at dawn and, traveling by river grain boat, by oxen team and on foot, came at last to the coast and finally to the hold of a tramp steamer—a berth won by a week's toil on the docks.

He spent a year at Honolulu, receiving, unconsciously, a very thin veneer of cosmopolitanism. Then opportunity offered, and as a peeler of potatoes and a washer of dishes, he shipped on a freighter for San Francisco. Fifteen years in the United States taught Lo Kiang that the melting pot of the nations is a crucible that does

not fuse the yellow man. Those fifteen years were ones of unremitting labor and sacrifice on the part of the father of the youth at Yungsui, who, rare letters from Shan Fuh stated, was even now in a fair way to pass the Chugen examinations to the third order of mandarin and would most certainly in time wear on his cap the red coral buttons of a provincial governor.

And now, at the close of the sixteenth year after his departure, Lo Kiang was an assistant cook in a dingy Chinese restaurant—a stoop-shouldered, drab-toned little Oriental, his short black hair plentifully shot with threads of gray, reasonably content with the unsatisfying content of hopelessness, finding a certain comfort in the sympathetic companionship of old Wo Lung, his employer. If at times Wo Lung expressed impatience at Lo Kiang's fixed determination to mail to China the greater part of his wages as soon as they were received, it was a kindly impatience and it always subsided at the employee's invariable response:

"I desire things for myself, of course. Above most things, I wish a business of my own. But my son is first, so that he may be a great man. Then will I work for myself."

In a few months, Lo Kiang became cook, with an assistant of his own. On the night of the first payday following his promotion, he stood in the doorway of the restaurant, fingering the three silver dollars which represented his increase in wages. In another pocket of his baggy black trousers reposed the amount of his former weekly pay. The major part of this, of course, would go to Yungsui. The three dollars represented a question involving either a visit to the gambling house of the Ten Thousand Little Monkeys or a pair of badly needed shoes for street wear. But Lo Kiang spent little time on the streets, and in the gambling house he knew that at this moment the little fan-tan beads were dancing fascinatingly on the board.

A few moments later, he entered the grubby, low-ceilinged basement room and found a place at a corner of the finely woven mat, with Sam Lee, the dealer, opposite, Li Chang, the laundryman, at his right and Wong Gow, the merchant, at his left. The game began slowly.

Sam Lee spilled a handful of beads from a bowl and poised a thin ivory blade above them, waiting for the others to stake their bets around the square, numbered card in the center. Chang placed a half-dollar on the figure 2 at his corner. Gow shoved forward a dollar until it covered the figure 3. Lo Kiang debated a moment between the 1 and the 4 and chose the former, staking a quarter. Sam Lee's blade darted into the beads, shoving four aside with each movement. Two of the players settled back to exchange disinterested remarks with the little circle of ochre-faced, black-clad spectators. The one who leaned forward with eyes intently endeavoring to count the fast dwindling pile of counters, was Lo Kiang. Sam Lee's quick blade shoved aside the last quartet of beads. An odd one remained.

"To Lo Kiang, the lucky," chanted Sam Lee, deftly scooping the beads into the bowl, flinging the winner a half-dollar and a quarter and possessing himself of the losings of Chang and Gow. On the next coup, Lo Kiang placed another quarter on the figure 4. When Sam Lee had divided the second handful of beads, no odd ones remained.

"To Lo Kiang again," intoned Sam Lee, smiling formally. "With the new player is the luck."

Next Lo Kiang staked a half dollar. He won. His following bet was a dollar. He won again. Puzzled by this run of luck, he reduced his bet to a quarter, and lost. In this there was an omen, and when the dividing blade again hung over the heap of quarters, he placed a dollar on the 3. He won. Then Lo Kiang ceased to be the man of a great vision. In him blazed up the fever of the game, driving all else from his mind as it wiped all expression from his face, steadying his fingers so there was no quiver as he placed his bets, filling his eyes with the cold, calculating light of the player who plays to win.

That night there was mild excitement in the gambling house of the Ten Thousand Little Monkeys. With interest swiftly heightening, the spectators crowded closer

and closer as Lo Kiang's unheard-of good fortune leaped his winnings from five dollars to ten, from ten to twenty-five and from twenty-five to fifty, while with each play Sam Lee became more genial, his air of urbanity more pronunced.

After a straight quintet of ruinous coups, the dealer bethought himself of the gambling axiom that a change of play often works a change of luck, and brought from a shelf behind him a small saucer. He scooped a handful of counters, placed them on the mat and covered them with the saucer. "Your stake of fifty dollars, four to one, Lo Kiang," he challenged, "that you cannot guess the number remaining—one, two, three or four."

Wordlessly, Lo Kiang pushed the amount onto the mat.

"Count the beads," he said with Chinese indifference. "My choice is two."

Sam Lee's blade descended into the beads. When he had finished, two remained on the table. The banker's smile was positively a grin as he shoved toward Lo Kiang two hundred dollars in banknotes. Lo Kiang folded the bills into a compact wad and concealed it in his blouse. Wong Gow rose stiffly and stepped to the door.

"And now—" began Sam Lee.

"Hai!" cried Gow suddenly. "Police!"

With a convulsive twist of his body, Sam Lee jerked the lamp from its bracket behind him and puffed out the flame, plunging the room into total darkness. Someone flung open a trap door in the corner, admitting a gust of cool, musty air. There was a pell-mell rush toward the opening and a pell-mell tumbling down the steep stairs. Lo Kiang was the last to descend. The others already had departed the cellar. Cautiously he climbed the outside stairs and pushed up the slanting door. The alley was quiet. He emerged, lowering the door silently. Something dark took indistinct form from a dense shadow and a hand fell on his shoulder. Lo Kiang squealed in affright and with a purely involuntary jerk of his body shook off the grasp.

"Quiet!" cautioned a low voice. "It is I—Gow."

"But the police—" quavered Lo Kiang.

A chuckle came through the dusk.

"There were no police," said Gow. "I wished you to keep what you had won, so I ended the game."

"But for what reason—"

"In my store," interrupted Gow, "is a better place to talk."

The merchant led Lo Kiang down the alley to a door set between two outjutting brick chimneys. Wong Gow turned the key and preceded the other through the opening. Inside, the merchant struck a match and applied the flame to the wick of a large and ornately flowered lamp. In the light which diffused a yellow glow over a room filled to its utmost capacity with counters, dusty showcases and high stacks of Chinese merchandise in jars and bottles and red tin boxes, Gow regarded Lo Kiang smilingly.

"You must have burned many sticks before your joss of fortune tonight, Lo Kiang," observed Gow.

Lo Kiang sank limply into a chair. The heat of the game had left him, and he was once more the meek and apologetic cook of Wo Lung's café.

"For that matter," went on Gow, "we are both fortunate. There is a certain matter that can be discussed." He produced pipes and tobacco. "You won, I believe, two hundred dollars?"

As if for the first time realizing his luck, Lo Kiang moved his hand to his blouse front and nodded dazedly.

Gow reflectively passed a hand over his shaven poll, struggling between a racial instinct to lead up to his object by an elaborate system of digressions and a desire to broach the subject at once. Finally he said:

"I will be very frank with you, Lo Kiang. It is best in matters of this kind. This—" he waved his hand to indicate the store—"is a prosperous business. For some time I have been searching for a partner with sufficient capital to enlarge it—to make it the largest store in the whole district. I believe I have found such a partner." The speaker sat back to observe the effect of his words, but found Lo Kiang's eyes directed at the floor.

Lo Kiang was silent for a long time.

"Fortune," he said finally, "is good. I

have within my reach tonight the realization of a great hope. It is not for myself that I desire prosperity. There is another matter."

"Of course," said Gow, "until our customers increase in proportion to our added improvements, profits will not be large. But in six months your share should be considerably more than you earn now, Lo Kiang."

Lo Kiang was prompted to accept at once, but Chinese caution asserted itself.

"Naturally, the matter requires thought," he said, rising from his chair. "I will have an answer if you will call tomorrow. At three o'clock?"

"At three o'clock," agreed Wong Gow, well satisfied.

Lo Kiang's decision was made before he reached his cot. He would accept the offer. In it he saw, first of all, an opportunity to increase his remittances to Yungsui, and secondly, the independence which had been his dream for years.

The cook's comparatively happy demeanor was noticed at once by Wo Lung the following morning. But, characteristically, the restaurant keeper delayed remarks until the postman lent them cause by tossing a letter through the door onto the cigar case.

"It is for you," said Wo Lung. "From Yungsui, by the Hong Kong stamp."

Lo Kiang smiled as he received the letter.

"You are happy this morning," suggested old Wo Lung.

Lo Kiang held the unopened letter in his hand while he told his employer the history of the preceding night. Sincere delight beamed from Wo Lung's eyes.

"My good wishes are with you, Lo Kiang," he said. "I shall lose a good cook, but for you I am very glad."

Lo Kiang tore open the envelope, and Wo Lung turned to arrange his stock of canned goods on the shelf behind the lunch counter.

"By the way," went on the restaurant keeper, "I expect a caller today—an old friend whom I knew in Shanghai ten years ago. Tonight I will sit with him at dinner. And Lo Kiang, if I remember rightly, my friend prefers the liquor drained from his chow mein. In some ways he is peculiar, but he is wealthy. Some day you will be wealthy, and—"

Rambling on in this fashion, Wo Lung suddenly was startled by an exclamation—a little ejaculation laden with pain. When he turned, he beheld a Lo Kiang whose shoulders sagged again with the old air of hopelessness. Silently, Lo Kiang extended the letter. It read:

"Most Illustrious: It is my great pride to inform that your inspired son has passed the Chugen test and is now waiting tuition for the great metropolitan test which admits to the grand academy of literature and a Pekin office. I, your unworthy friend, have made arrangements for his teaching by a staff of the best educators Pekin affords. These, thieves that they are, would have me pay them one hundred and ninety-five yuen. With fear in my insignificant heart I request this enormous amount for the furtherance of your son's glorious career. Shan Fuh."

"Well?" asked Wo Lung when he had finished.

"One hundred and ninety-five yuen," said Lo Kiang tonelessly, "is one hundred and ninety-five dollars."

"But you cannot intend to send that amount!"

"Yes," said Lo Kiang simply.

Wo Lung snorted. "For sixteen years," he declared fiercely, "you have sacrificed yourself to this son. It grows time that you look to your own ends."

"To me it is not a sacrifice," said Lo Kiang patiently. "When Wong Gow comes I will tell him."

Wo Lung's persuasive powers proved futile. Promptly at three o'clock Gow called.

"But this is foolish," he protested, after he had heard Lo Kiang's statement. "Within a few months you can again send money to this son—more money than ever before."

"This money is needed at once," replied the other quietly. "The tests are given but once in a long period. My thanks, Wong Gow, but I must refuse."

"You would not be that unwise," said the merchant confidently. "I will give you further time. Tomorrow I shall come back."

He left Lo Kiang standing by a table, a pathetic figure of a man grown suddenly very old but, withal, a man whose final decision has been made. After a time, Lo Kiang entered the kitchen, filled a pan with potatoes and with these and a knife, seated himself on the back step in the alley. The potato peeling progressed slowly. He was not more than half through his task an hour later when he heard voices in the kitchen. Wo Lung's wealthy friend from Shanghai, he decided. Then he heard his own name, pronounced by a voice strangely familiar.

The screen creaked. Lo Kiang turned his head; the knife fell with a clatter into the pan. In the doorway stood Foo Gan, now clothed in a neat American business suit, his upper lip adorned by a thin gray mustache, a few wrinkles on his cheeks and a new portliness about his waist, but still the Foo Gan of Shinchau, the Foo Gan of Lo Kiang's memory, changed in few respects.

"Greetings, Lo Kiang!" said Foo Gan, after a clumsy pause.

Of the three hundred precepts of punctilio set forth in the classics for use on such occasions, Lo Kiang was at a loss to choose even one.

"I hope you have eaten well," he said at last, and became silent, his mind on the present unfulfilment of a certain boast he had made sixteen years ago in Shinchau. He strove to direct the subsequent conversation into channels that would permit of a graceful explanation, but the visitor was preparing to turn back into the restaurant before Lo Kiang remarked with careless unconcern, but with an underlying trace of defiance:

"Had you delayed your visit longer, Foo Gan, I might have received you in an establishment of my own. But I have devoted little time to my own fortunes since leaving Yungsui. Were it not for my son I might now entertain you as I once promised."

"No man succeeds at once," said Foo Gan courteously. "But what has your son to do with it?"

"All my earnings since I departed have gone to Yungsui," explained Lo Kiang.

Foo Gan regarded him with amazement.

"What foolishness!" he exclaimed.

"Foolishness?"

"Foolishness, certainly," declared Foo Gan. "You must know that your wife and son died in the great floods of fourteen years ago."

Lo Kiang stared, his hands fumbling nervelessly in the potato pan.

"Dead?" he heard himself say, his voice seeming to come from far distances. "Why, then—Shan Fuh—"

"Shan Fuh," said Foo Gan, "has prospered greatly. For years he has been living in luxury at Yungsui."

Next month: SOFT SOAP, *by Newton A. Fuessle.* An ex-machinist goes on the road with a heart full of hope and a sample case full of soap. The stock of hope is rapidly depleted when he finds that the soap counters are stacked against him.

THE BRIDEGROOM ELECT

BY MARION HILL

Barring flukes, the best man wins at any game. It is even so on the high seas of long-distance courtship, where the unchartered rocks and casual icebergs wreck the hopes and plans of the unworthy.

RE-PACKING a cat show is nothing to it. Unloading a circus is nothing to it. The proper distribution of chattering, wild-eyed emigrants has a noise and stress peculiarly its own. The only thing that jabbers more insanely than an Italian male who doesn't know what's coming next nor where from, is the Italian female. And custom alone keeps the officials on Detention Island from going as frantic as their charges.

"This is the craziest bunch I've handled in a month of Sundays," remarked the smiling matron, placidly, to the inspector. "And if it weren't for that girl Bianca, who's mothering everything she can lay a finger on, I wouldn't know half the time whether I was on my head or my heels."

Hearing her name mentioned, Bianca, who had been trying to cajole somebody's lustily bad-tempered baby, left off trying and hurried towards the matron, asking excitedly:

"Ees Pedro for me? Ees?"

"No, he isn't," confessed the matron, reluctantly. "But there's plenty of time yet, Bianca. Don't worry."

Bianca's beaming smile turned to a pathetic, tremulous glimmer; then she patiently went back to the squirming strange baby.

"Think it's going to be all right with her?" asked the inspector, in a low voice of more than usual sympathy. He, too, had recognized in Bianca a certain individualizing force that turned her from an emigrant into a woman.

"Yes, I think so," replied the matron. "We have located him by 'phone and sent for him. He's gone for the marriage license. He's Pedro Vanini,—has a little shoe shop on Third Avenue."

"Record good?"

"Quite. He works hard, saves money, is a favorite with the girls, but has kept pretty faithful to Bianca the whole two years he has been waiting for her. In fact, he's spread such reports of Bianca's beauty that the quarter is wild to see her. Queer ideas of beauty, hasn't he?"

"You call her plain?" asked the inspector, surprised.

The matron took a new look at the Italian girl, rapidly summing up her points.

Bianca's age was all of twenty, which meant that she had outgrown the delicacy of what must have been an utterly lovely youth. In exchange, she had attained the proportions of a statue,—big-bosomed, large-waisted, and firm-footed. Her eyes were glorious,—the appealing velvety brown eyes of a white heifer. Enough hair escaped from under the black silk handkerchief to proclaim itself a coppery gold.

A short, thick, much-gathered skirt whose one merit was durability; a home-made black sateen waist with red glass buttons on it; thick white stockings, constantly in evidence; and shoes of stout leather with cords as strong as cables, successfully concealed all beauty of outline.

Perhaps it was this canal-boat style of foot-covering that decided the natty little matron.

"Yes, I call her plain," she admitted, gently. "Don't you?"

"Not much," proclaimed the inspector. "When Bianca gets into a man's eye she sort of fills it and stays there. Bet she'll make the kind of wife that can turn an omelet with one hand, hold a baby in the other, and open the oven door with her

foot in time to save the bread from burning; do it with a lazy grace and a dazzling smile, too. Pedro's in luck."

Here the inspector was peremptorily summoned to attend to one jabbering group, and the matron to another, while the work of ladling out the emigrants went steadily on.

Meanwhile,—the baby having dropped to sleep in its miserably frightened mother's arms,—Bianca sat down on the stuffed, knotted blanket that represented her trunk, and surveyed the excited scenes around her with an alertness of sympathy that made her heart soar with the lucky and sink with the luckless.

Here went, smiling, a snapping-eyed Neapolitan grandmother of forty, volubly claimed by a Harlemized, up-to-date daughter-in-law.

Next, the mother of the sleeping baby emitted a sudden squawk of joy and gamboled heavily into the arms of a Syrian organ-grinder who had brought the monkey along to be one of the reception committee. While the re-united husband and wife hurled conversation at each other, the baby and the monkey exchanged silent grimaces,—the baby in mother's arms, the monkey in father's. All four wandered off to happiness.

The next scream that came to Bianca's ears was not one of joy, but was wrung from a tortured heart, as poor, ear-ringed sixteen-year-old Giulia Riccabocca was told that her fisherman fiancé had been drowned a week ago, and that she must return to Sicily without even seeing his grave.

"Dear Mother of Our Lord pity her and comfort her," prayed Bianca, bending her golden head over her clasped hands; adding irrepressibly, "and save my Pedro alive for me!"

On the top of sorrow came wedding bells, for blushing Aanchen Gratz was taken in marriage by a stout young German who had "delicatessen shop on Amsterdam Avenue," written all over him.

For Uncle Sam watches over his new daughters with wise care and does not permit one of them to depart with a man until she's his wife. Uncle Sam often has to provide the parson, the ring, the best man, the bridesmaid, the cake and the kiss; but he does it. If the young men temporize about marrying them, back home they go.

Reaching this stage in her ruminations, Bianca awesomely wondered what would happen to her if she were thus deported; for "home" there was none. Her last relative was dead. There was even less of "home" on the other side than there was on this.

Viewed from the near distance, New York was just miles upon miles of battlemented castles. And there wafted from it no fragrance of ripening grapes, of wild thyme and of roses, but only rank whiffs of rotting, barnacled logs floating on an extremely dirty sea.

Already there descended upon Bianca's lonely heart the pangs of exile. She seemed to have nothing left of her own,—neither country, friends nor language. Like everything else, language has to be lost to be appreciated. Bereft of Italian, Bianca was as one dumb. And it's awkward to be dumb in a strange land. In a way she had a foundation of English; that is, she was sitting on a book captivatingly labeled, "How to Speak English in Twenty-five Lessons. Twenty-five cents."

Bianca had tried to buy a "How to Speak American," since it was to America she was coming; but such a book was not on the market. Evidently no one spoke American. On the way over, Bianca had tried to study, beginning with a churchly affair called "Cardinal Numbers," proceeding thus,—"Own, tuo, tree, few-or," and so on, to the grand American consummation of Million. She had a certain reason for wanting to know about numbers. The rest of the book interested her but little, for it was composed of sentences which she felt very sure she would have no opportunity to use upon Pedro.

Pedro, Pedro! If she could but see him, how easy would it be to love this blue American sky, this grand city of stone that was pronounced New-a Yok! As for the lack of flowers—well, there are always flowers where Love is. After Pedro,—flowers!

All this time Pedro was in quite as much of a happy ferment as was she. Bathed in bliss and arrayed in his beautiful ten-dollar wedding suit, he was hurrying to the Island as fast as subway, elevated, feet, tug-boat and brother, could take him. For Andreas Vanini came along to be best man.

Take a look at each of them in turn.

Pedro was undersized, lithe, lizardly and radiant, from his oiled hair to his vaselined yellow boots. His suit was of a brown so light that it was almost chrome yellow. His glistening satin tie, under a still more glistening celluloid collar, was as purple as a bunch of young grapes, matching to perfection the hue of his silk socks. The shine of his eyes and the flash of his teeth were exactly what might be expected from one who had a marriage license in his pocket and magnificent creases in his trousers. From Pedro's red lips kept bubbling snatches of a popular song exhorting some one to "Peel an onion, and weep for me,"—or as Pedro preferred it,—"Pill a yonyon, an' wippa for me."

What helped along the merriness of Pedro was the knowledge that his shoe business could lock its doors for a few hours without causing a shrinkage in the day's receipts. For Pedro's trade was not so much the selling of new shoes as the restoration of old ones; and everybody knows that old shoes travel to the cobbler at night.

And Andreas? There was no song on the lips of Andreas, and no radiance about him anywhere except that he held in one huge hand, as a gift for the bride, a bunch of pink carnations and asparagus fern,—the least faded of his down-hearted stock,—for the business of Andreas was that of cut flowers and it takes an awful amount of coaxing to keep up the courage of a meek-souled rose that wants to die. No wonder that shambling big Andreas was pathetically glum, and that his dark eyes, usually so trustful and calm, stared drearily into a doubtful future. His dingy garments hung loosely from his big frame, calling attention to the fact that a few good meals could be made welcome.

"De trub' with you is that you too damn-soft," burst irritatedly from Pedro at last, after a furtive disgusted scrutiny of the shabbiness of his best man. They were walking together up Third Avenue in the rays of a sun that was thoroughly merciless about showing up the threadbare seams and ancient grease spots of Andreas. To be sure, it played even by showing up also the strong grace of his form and the honesty of his dark face; but Pedro was too accustomed to seeing these in Andreas to feel the value of them at a time when a clean shirt and a new tie would have been so much more useful. "Much-a too damn-soft. How you expect annybodda can give away mon' an' keep it too?" Here Pedro delivered himself glibly of an Italian proverb to the effect that if you smear yourself with honey you must resign yourself to being devoured by flies.

Andreas shrugged his huge shoulders apologetically and dismissively. Pedro was referring to the fact, too often discussed, that Andreas had been fool enough to pay away his recent earnings to a widow with three babies; the inevitable result being that Andreas was seventy frightful dollars in debt to his landlord, and that the sorry little flower-stand was threatened by the sheriff,—at a time of year, too, when flowers were just promising to be profitable. Unfortunate that Andreas was made of stuff that can't bear to see babies starve!

Here Pedro dropped all unpleasant thoughts and resumed singing, "Pill a yonyon," for the reason that a very pretty ninety-eight cent girl was passing and casting eyes at him. Her hat cost ninety-eight cents, its feather forty-nine; her lawn waist was a ninety-eight center, her pink beads forty-niners; her blue velvet skirt cost ninety-eight cents a yard; her champagne-colored silk hose, forty-nine; her fearfully high-heeled slippers ninty-eight cents apiece.

"Tell-a me, she some peach, eh?" said Pedro, still swimming in the bliss of her surreptitious smile, and wishing in a general, unnamed way, that he could be a Morman. "But," firmly, "no man's girl ain't got nothings on me now I have my beauty of a Bianca. Why don't you try getta girl, my broth', like-a that peach jus' gone by, eh?"

Andreas slowly pivoted his big sunburned neck and took a repudiative look at the damsel from the rear.

"Fall a lit' rain an' she spoil like-a da mush," decided Andreas, done with her and her kind.

"Sss!" sneered Pedro, contemptuously. "You don't know good t'ing when you see it. You make-a m' sick; you make-a m' hat ache." Pedro meant head. Even at that, he meant very little, and, singing again, blithely ducked into the subway that was to take him and Andreas to the waiting one,—*la bella Bianca*.

Back on the Island.

"Find B. Campionaro," said the inspector, reading from a card, and addressing the matron tersely. "Two men here for her; one big, one runty. Runty one has a marriage license. Bet she's a strapper. All the little men want to marry elephants. Who's B. Campionaro?"

"Why, it's Bianca!" cried the matron, delightedly. "And her Pedro! I'll get her."

This was not difficult, for Bianca, having heard the magic combination of names, Pedro and Bianca, was already billowing toward her, the roll of blankets in one strong hand, and the equally soggy, "How to Speak English," in the other.

"*Now* ees Pedro?" she asked breathlessly.

"Yes, indeed," chirruped the matron, reassuringly. "Come along. Here's Pedro, and the best man, and the marriage license. All that's needed is the bride. So, come, Bianca!"

Smiling wanly and half fainting with excitement, Bianca followed the matron into a private office, and there, seeing Pedro in the flesh and the glory of purple trimmings, dropped book and blankets to fly into his suddenly wooden arms. Her eyes were blinded with her own tender tears as she uttered bits of golden Italian, calling him her man, her salvation, her true heart, her ever-faithful one.

Then, remembering Andreas and the presence of others, she shyly drew away from Pedro.

"For my sister," said Andreas, extending the carnations.

"Ah, my big, kind Andreas!" she cried, accepting the flowers and rapturously kissing them, touching them up the while with an artistic hand that put the asparagus fern in exactly the right place.

Her kiss was for the blossoms, not for the donor, but it gave Andreas a queer thrill of hot pleasure. They were his flowers,—from his hand,— and she had kissed them. A little more and he knew that tears would come into his eyes, for the sight of Bianca's peasant costume had brought back to him the picture of home, reminding him of the fragrance of the sweet garden herbs around his mother's cottage, and recalling to his exiled ears the solemn music of the bell on the little church where he and Bianca and Pedro had been confirmed when children. Mother—Italy—Bianca—he had not before known how deeply dear the three words were to him. He thought that Bianca looked as beautiful as a saint,—with her golden hair demurely bound down by its black kerchief, and the mystic love-light in her great dark eyes.

But Pedro? Pedro's jaw had dropped open from dismay. Surely his once-beloved had grown thicker, older, coarser! When she was seventeen, he had adored her for her sylph-like delicacy of outline, for the pomegranate red of her young mouth, and for the laughter and daring of the maid that is her property before she gets good sense. This earnest-eyed, solid Madonna was not the need of his volatile, "pill-a-yonyon" heart.

And oh, those clodhopping shoes, that baggy, fustian skirt, that handkerchief for a hat,—how they would wring helpless giggles from the pretty, pretty, pretty ninety-eight cent-girls! The marriageable belles of Third Avenue, they who could dress like countesses on three dollars a week, were all agog to see the Italian damsel whose fascinations had put theirs in the shade. Pedro felt that he could never, never show them Bianca and survive. He would be the laughing-stock of the quarter.

Pedro Vanini's horror was so pronounced even in its wordless state, that a sense of jar and trouble began to descend upon all concerned, upon the three principals and the three subordinates,—for an interpreter

had been called near to facilitate and validate the expected marriage service.

Bianca was the last to feel the tragedy and the first to speak.

"My Pedro, what has gone wrong with you?" she gasped, convulsively pressing the flowers to her bosom as if hoping they might save it from the knife.

But the cruel knife was driven home.

"It is you that has gone wrong," answered Pedro, brutally explicit. "You are no longer beautiful. My love was for your loveliness; and now that the loveliness has gone, the love has gone. I am sorry. But so it is."

"Pedro—in pity—"

"I am not to blame."

"You sent for me, you sent for me," wailed Bianca, in torture.

"What I sent for was the pretty girl that you used to be," explained Pedro, mercilessly. "Not for you."

"Oh, why can I not die?" gasped Bianca, as the wound widened. "What am I to do?"

Here the matron put her arms around her, while the interested interpreter had a little verbal struggle with the recalcitrant bridegroom. Andreas, with his big arms swinging idly at his sides, took no part in the affair except to turn his somber eyes from one actor to another.

"Now you try to calm yourself, Bianca Campionaro," soothed the matron, "and see if we can't fix things for you. You are young and strong, and there is plenty of room for you in the world even if this—this shrimp pie *doesn't* want you. Haven't you anywhere else to go?"

Having followed this, in English though it was, Bianca shook her head desolately.

"Haven't you any woman friend over here?" pursued the matron. "No sister—aunt—nothing?"

"No, no, no," sobbed Bianca.

The matron looked serious. She even began to have a doubt of Bianca. The whole game might have been pre-arranged, in order to get a young girl into the country. It wouldn't do to be lenient, for there were plenty of spotters around ready to report the least stretching of the law. The matron looked inquiringly at the interpreter.

"Can't do anything with the mule," he confessed, releasing Pedro.

Again Bianca caught the sense of it.

"Then must I go back?" she questioned frantically. "Oh, that terrible steerage again! And this time no hope, but shame, to be forever at my side! Yes, let me go back to hang my head and try to close my ears to the bitter laughter of all who know me. And what will they think? They will not believe my tale. No one with a heart could believe it. They will be sure I have done some wrong. Oh, Pedro, Pedro!"

In answer to this heart-rending appeal, Pedro slowly drew the marriage license from his pocket.

The matron, the inspector, and the interpreter all brightened comfortably, giving Bianca a momentary hope.

She took a step towards her affianced, timidly holding out her hands.

"You are sorry," she translated, softly. "You are going to marry me?"

"No!" said Pedro, scowling and giving a vicious tug to his purple necktie. "I am to destroy the license."

His "No!" brought forth two pronounced results. One was that Bianca shrank back as if lashed by a whip; the other was that Andreas lifted one of his huge hands till he could have a look at it, then slowly closed it into a fist which landed an unhasty but voluminous smash full in his brother's mouth.

Pedro went over backward and lay flat.

With a low, mothering cry, Bianca attempted to reach him, but Andreas used his fist arm to bar her from the rescue.

"Let him lie on the ground; that is the proper bed for a dog," he commanded sternly.

"Andreas!—your brother!—a *dog!*"

"Can you say that he has not acted as one?" asked Andreas, simply.

"No, I cannot, I cannot!" admitted Bianca, breaking into a passion of tears. "I think I despise him!"

"Weep," permitted Andreas, lowering the bar of his arm and drawing her toward him that she might cry against his shoulder.

By now Pedro, ceasing to see stars, sat up from the waist and leaned his giddy

head in one shaking hand. In amiable befuddlement he sang two whole lines of "Pill a yonyon an' wippa for me," before recollecting what had happened. Then he jumped snarlingly to his feet and tried to pull a dagger.

"Ah, quit-a da fool," superbly said Andreas, in his best English, "an' gimme da lice'."

He spoke in his tone of elder brother,—head of the house of Vanini. So Pedro shrugged his shoulders and handed over the marriage license.

"Bianca," said Andreas, changing from his best English to his best Italian, "you are going to marry *me*." He frustrated her attempt to escape by softly holding her closer, forcing her to listen. "Let it happen at once for on his paper we have but to write Andreas for Pedro. Also, I love you, Bianca. I did not know how much till you kissed the flowers I gave you, and arranged them so as they would sell. I need you as well as love you. My business is fading away for want of you. But—first—I am a very poor man; are you afraid to be poor?"

"I am not," stammered Bianca. It committed her to nothing.

"One more month and I may not even have a flower-stand; for I owe much money; very much money; more money than I could ever save; more money than Pedro could lend me;—seventy-five dollars," confessed Andreas bravely. "But such home as I have, I offer to you, and will fight hard to save it for you. I think, too, you could fight better than I. For would you not like to work with flowers, Bianca? To tie lovely yellow rosebuds into bunches,—to group the dewy little violets? and to keep carnations from withering by—by kissing them, Bianca?"

"I would cut the stems and put them in water and set them in a cold place," stammered Bianca practically. With the back of her hand she had wiped the tears from her shining eyes. "And I would love it!"

"And love *me*?"

"I have always loved you as my good big brother," she whispered tremblingly.

"Then it will be easy to love me as your good big husband," settled Andreas composedly.

Thus it happened that Bianca Campionaro became Mrs. Vanini after all.

It was not till after the ceremony that Pedro became sorry for what he had done. And then he became *very* sorry. For the ninety-eight cent girls would have the laugh yet at his expense.

Bianca, with an adorably lovely pink flush replacing the steerage pallor on her young cheek, shyly unbuttoned the top button of her unfashionable blouse and extracted from a warm and fragrant hiding-place, a wonderfully likely-looking wad of something.

"For my dear man," she said, depositing it in Andreas's disbelieving grasp.

"What is it?" he asked, rather wildly.

"Speak English," commanded the smiling matron. "You are an American citizen now, Bianca."

Thus exhorted, Bianca made magnificent use of one of her Twenty-five Lessons. She said only three words, yet they were as magical as a fairy's wand, turning the doubtful future into an assured heaven; transplanting the flower-stand to a corner of Fifth Avenue and filling it with ever-fragrant blossoms; clothing Bianca in the best of raiment and turning her beautiful golden hair loose under a bewitching hat; to say nothing of furnishing Andreas with a becoming tailor-made-to-order and to-fit suit. What she said was:

"Eight hundr' doll's!"

The prize winners in the January Black Cat Club Contest will be announced in the April number.

FATE'S TEETOTUMS

BY RAYMOND EVANS

He was young, he traveled the roads of destiny, and the mating instinct was strong within him—just the temperamental sort of cuss who would allow his life to be ordered according to the whims of nature, a fly and a daddy-long-legs.

THE genesis of this story goes back a million years.

Not precisely a million, perhaps. It may have been fewer years than that; it may have been even more. At any rate, it was a long long time. The details thereof are written in the book of the geological survey of Virginia, but suffice it to say that in that very remote day something or other slipped in the bowels of the earth below what is now a green, be-cow-pastured part of the Shenandoah Valley and raised the grade from a certain point to a certain other point ten miles away, six inches to the mile. That was one reason why the train to Persimmon Crossing was so late that day. Another reason was the fly. But before we get to the fly we must dispose of the grandaddy-long-legs.

The grandaddy-long-legs sat on the very top of the guide post that stood at the fork of the road Dick came to at the close of an October day. He sat there in plain sight, but it was quite a while before Dick saw him. Dick was busy trying to make out what the guidepost had to say. He walked around the post, looking at it from every side, and the conclusion of the matter was that the guidepost had nothing whatever to say. Obviously there had been a time when it had borne some legend for wayfarers, but now the words were weather-beaten and almost obliterated.

"Well," said Dick, "of all the uncommunicative guideposts! I gather that a certain place lies this way and a certain other place that way, but further deponent there is none. Oh well! it doesn't matter, since I am going nowhere in particular. Doubtless this way will be quite as interesting as that. If it isn't—no matter. I shall never know what I've missed. I'll toss for it."

Then it was that he saw the grandaddy-long-legs.

"No, by Jove!" he went on, "I'll ask the native."

He drew close to the post, with his eyes on a level with the ungainly insect, and solemnly put this question:

"Grandaddy-long-legs, which way does she live?"

The creature deliberately lifted one attenuated member and pointed to the right.

Dick doffed his cap and swept a magnificent obeisance.

"As you say!"

He hitched his knapsack well up between his shoulders, gripped afresh the hickory staff he carried, and swung into the road that led to the right.

He had not been gone ten seconds when the grandaddy-long-legs lifted his off front foot and pointed to the left. But Dick was on his way and never knew.

The fly, a very ordinary specimen of *musca domestica*, inadvertently flew over the smokestack of the engine of V. C. Accommodation Number Eight while the latter paused at the station at Greenbrier. The fireman stood beside the engine with a long beaked oil-can in one hand and the thread cap of an oil-cup in the other. He was exchanging a passing word with the section boss.

"Fine day, Mr. Murphy," he said.

"Right y' are, me b'y," said Murphy heartily.

At this precise juncture the fly, with wings scorched to stumps, fell like a cinder and pitched headlong into the open

oil-cup. Of such trivial, random stuff are made the teetotums Fate spins in shaping our ends!

Then Murphy went his way and the fireman turned, filled the oil-cup from his oil can, screwed on the lid of the unfortunate insect's unpremeditated sepulchre, and swung to his place in the cab.

At the same time, a buckboard whirled up to the station in a cloud of dust and Dorothy Hall alighted therefrom—just in time to board Number Eight as she went her leisurely way out among the foothills. The station loafers caught the merest glimpse of a delicate modeled ankle—a shimmer of silken hose. The conductor made an inarticulate noise and swept a professional gesture. The drivers slipped and raced in a rain of sparks, then caught the rails and picked up speed; and thus Number Eight ambled out of Greenbrier.

Dorothy Hall, breathless, a little flushed from the exertion of climbing aboard the car, threw her little brown bag into a vacant seat and sank down beside it. Coincidently the fly sank slowly through the amber oil, down to the bottommost depth of the oil-cup, and there settled to rest over the tiny hole through which the oil flowed to the spinning bearing below.

It was fully an hour before the fly began to have an appreciable effect upon the functioning of old 1100, the immemorial locomotive that drew Number Eight to and fro over the midland branch. Then 1100 began to limp. Even as Dorothy Hall drew out her little enameled watch, thinking happily that in another hour she would be alighting from the train at Persimmon Crossing and starting for her three-mile walk home,—even then old 1100 was beginning to lose time. And by the time Number Eight came to the foot of the long grade that leads up from Beech Knob to Persimmon Crossing—the grade that was raised six inches to the mile that day a million years before when something slipped in the hearth of the earth below—by that time old 1100 was creeping along at a snail's pace, emitting a cutting squeak with every turn of her drivers.

After a bit, Number Eight came to a standstill and the brakeman went back with his little red flag while the engineer and the fireman monkeyed with a hot bearing. Finally the fireman, poking about the aforesaid oil-cup with a bit of bent wire, speared the corpse of the luckless fly.

The engineer swore softly as the fireman held up his prize.

"I've been ditched before now by a three months' old shoat," he said, "but this is the first time I was ever held up by a fly. Fill her up, Jim, and let's be on our way."

But the mischief was done, as far as Dorothy Hall was concerned. With growing concern she watched the October evening shadows deepen as Number Eight labored up the long grade. She thought of the folks sitting down to supper in the long dining-room of Three Oaks farmstead. She had meant to surprise them at supper. She thought of the long, dark road out to Three Oaks and of how lonely the stretch was that ran through Skinner's woods.

"If I had only dropped a line to brother Ben!" she said to herself. "I might have known the train would be late or something would happen."

It was dark as Egypt when Number Eight reached Persimmon Crossing, nearly two hours late. Dorothy stepped down to the cinder platform with sinking heart and turned to watch the receding train as though the light that glimmered through its windows were the last warm radiance in a world otherwise sunk into darkness. Then the fireman opened the furnace door and a great fan of light shot upward, reflecting rosy red from the smoke and steam above the engine. The glow lighted faintly the wistful face of Dorothy Hall and picked out in high lights the red shape of some newly arrived farm implement, lying dismembered on the deserted platform of the little flag station.

Then the furnace door closed—the light was snuffed out—and the girl turned to face alone three miles of dark and lonesome road.

Dick camped down by the side of the road in the very deepest part of Skinner's woods. He chose a grassy bank at the

edge of a little glade, and there established himself for the night in the simplest fashion. He built a little fire of dry twigs, took from the Swiss rucksack he carried, a little frying pan, a bit of bacon wrapped in oiled paper, a big tin cup, a little canister of coffee, a handful of persimmons—the latter obviously the fruit of foraging along the road,—and a folding wire contraption which presently became a stove when unfolded and set over the fire.

When he had fried the bacon and set the coffee to simmer over the dying fire, he drew from the rucksack a few ship's biscuits and threw himself at ease on the grass beside the fire.

"We shall dine *al fresco* tonight, Jarvis. *En plein* air, so to speak. So buttle along."

He speared a strip of bacon with his clasp knife.

"And mind, Jarvis, the Port must be cold. But not too cold, Jarvis—by all means not *too* cold."

He lolled back and munched his biscuit and bacon in leisurely luxury. When he had eaten his persimmon and washed his supper down with a draught of black coffee, he took from his pocket a little brier pipe and from his knapsack a little book, as brown and service-worn as the pipe, and having fed and stirred his fire to new life and radiance, he stretched at length before the fire, with his head on his wadded-up blanket, and read aloud between pipes—to the amazement and consternation of a white-footed wood mouse which watched him from the shelter of the brush-grown fence-row.

This is the manner of man the wood mouse saw:

A bronzed faced youngster, curly pated, brown eyed, lithely built, clad in worn corduroys of indeterminate color. His face, indistinct in the firelight, was a humorous, kindly countenance—albeit terrible to the wood mouse. In his hand he held a leather-bound book, a sort of pocket scrap-book, on the back of which was scrawled in India ink the word "Psalter."

He was reading, in a sing-song monotone:

Perhaps we are led and our loves are fated,
And our steps are counted one by one;
Perhaps we shall meet and our souls be mated,
After the burnt-out sun.

For over the world a dim hope hovers,
The hope at the heart of all our songs—
That the banded stars are in league with lovers,
And fight against their wrongs.

His voice trailed off to a mere murmur, and the wood mouse took heart. Presently, however, the reading became audible again:

So I go to the long adventure, lifting
My face to the far, mysterious goals,
To the last assize, to the final sifting
Of gods and stars and souls.

Then the voice lapsed to silence and the reader lay very still, looking down the road, faintly lighted for a little distance by the flickering light of the camp fire. Presently he slowly tore a fly-leaf from the book he held; then another; and yet another—till he had four or five leaves in a crumpled ball in his hand. With his eyes still fixed on the road, he reached out and dropped this ball of paper into the heart of the dying fire. A little flare of flame shot up, illuminating the road brightly for a fleeting moment.

She grew out of the darkness;—dawned upon his senses like the unsubstantial figment of a mirage—a girlish, hesitant figure, ringed about with a sort of palpitant nimbus, the quivering reflection of the wavering firelight upon a background of brilliant October leaves. As he looked she paused and hung in her tracks, uncertain, as though meditating flight.

Dick rose, knocked the ashes from his pipe with studied deliberation, and began to move toward her. His shadow suddenly bulked enormous, stretching interminably down the road and blotting the girl from his sight. A moment later he was in the middle of the road and his shadow rushed deep into the woods on the farther side of the highway. The fire was wholly at his back now, and he saw the figure of the girl quite plainly—her slender figure,

her severely simple serge costume, her jaunty little velvet hat, the little brown bag she carried, and her face, wistful and a little fearful, and very beautiful in the half-light.

When he had moved to within a few yards of the girl, Dick paused and stood as if transfixed.

"You?" he asked, wonderingly. "Is it indeed you?"

The girl approached, shading her eyes and moving with irresolute footsteps.

"Why—why—" she began. "I—I don't believe—"

"I know."

Dick took the little brown bag and led the way to the fire. He spread the blanket before the girl's feet and threw a handful of twigs upon the fire.

"Won't you sit down?" he said. And then, when they were seated together before the fire:

"I have been waiting so long!"

"Waiting?"

"For a thousand years." He put up a hand as if to anticipate her reply. "No; don't laugh,—though I know it sounds ridiculous enough. Let me have my say before you laugh—when I saw you in the road yonder, it all came over me with a rush,—the memory of long and immemorial quests, quests in lands that I thought I had never seen—just such aimless quests as these which send me off tramping the roads each fall, to the horror of my aunts and the bewilderment of my poor little mother. And then I knew that it was you I have always been looking for. Now I have found you—"

He paused, searching the puzzled face of the girl by his side. His face flushed.

"What a driveling drool!" he said. "Do forgive me!"

"All the same," he added, after a pause, "you do look—" He paused, and made a despairing gesture. "Oh, I can't explain!"

Dorothy Hall stretched out a little hand and touched his long, brown fingers.

"Why—why—" she said, "I—I feel—oh, so queer! Like a dream. Oh, I can't explain either!"

The fire had burned to fading cinders.

"Come dear," said Dick, "let's be going. When I've seen you safely home to that Three Oaks place I'll hark back here to roost. And tomorrow—"

Murmuring soft phrases into each other's ears, they were gone into the gloom of Skinner's woods and the white-footed wood mouse breathed freely once more.

And the grandaddy-long-legs that pointed out the road—the fly that died that the train might be delayed—these vital and immediate factors in the lives of those oblivious lovers were as wholly out of their happy reckoning as was the flaw in the earth's crust that changed the grade from Beech Knob to Persimmon Crossing a million years ago.

"One man agin a damned town—that's old Cark!"

Thus Old Cark himself sums up the case in exactly nine words and a pause; but when it comes to giving out information about the weapons of warfare and so forth, he isn't talking for publication.

If you want the battle by rounds, we shall have to refer you to THE EPIC OF OLD CARK in the April BLACK CAT.

SOMETHING FOR NOTHING

BY ELIZABETH ANDERSON

Remington pictures a man who made a living with nothing more than a collie, a pony and a gun. Monkey McGann omitted the pony and the gun in his operations and he further reduced the "overhead" by letting somebody else own the dog.

MR. DUFFY struggled with a recalcitrant collar button and cursed the vagaries of a stiff collar. Monkey McGann was an unsympathetic observer; he sat with his chair tilted back against the wall, and manipulated a toothpick with a nice attention to detail.

Duffy settled the collar to his satisfaction and resumed the conversation while he tied his necktie.

"No use being a watchful waiter when you are in need of a job," he said. "You have to hustle yourself and hunt one up. Why don't you?"

"Waste of time," grunted McGann.

"What do you mean—waste of time?" frowned Duffy.

"There ain't no use in my spending a week of my perfectly good time looking for a job that I'll lose in a day," explained McGann with resignation.

"Well then, don't come grumbling around me," said Duffy, and slipped into his coat.

"I ain't grumbling," answered McGann. "I just said I wisht it was *me* takin' the widow to a show tonight instead of *you*. I was also sayin', though, that when I does a thing, I does it right, and I asks you why you ain't takin' the lady to dinner first?"

"I tell you I haven't the cash!"

"Well then, between you and me, Mr. E. P. Duffy, if it comes to choosing between havin' a job and no cash, and *not* havin' a job and no cash, me for the 'I won't works!' Why I could take the widow to a *cheap* show, myself, but I wouldn't risk it. No sir! I know these dames; they'd rather stay home than sit in a dollar seat on an empty stomach."

If McGann's wisdom caused Mr. Duffy to doubt the ultimate success of his evening, he concealed his uneasiness. He perfumed his handkerchief with a goodly supply of violet water and felt his pocket to be sure the tickets were safe.

"So long," he said. "You and my old dog can keep each other company as usual. Stay as long as you like, Monk, and tomorrow you take my advice and go hunt a job."

At the sound of the closing door, Mr. Duffy's bulldog emerged from under the bed and cocked an inquiring ear at McGann. The Irishman winked at him solemnly and pocketed his toothpick.

"Hullo," he said, and obligingly extended his foot to scratch his old crony's back. The dog's lips drew apart in an ecstatic grin and one hind leg beat an enthusiastic *bravo* on the floor. "What are we goin' to do tonight?" asked McGann. "Here you, quit that! I ain't no massage artist. Come on, let's go out and hunt cats-s-s!"

The dog accepted the invitation with alacrity and bounded down the stairs, barking hysterically. McGann followed lackadaisically; he was thinking. Of late he had been basking in the sun of the widow's approval and now Mr. Duffy threatened to eclipse that sun. McGann was not depressed by the situation, for he had supreme confidence in himself; he was simply wondering how he could outplay Mr. Duffy, and he left the house with his rival's dog at his heels, in search of cats—and inspiration.

It was a hot night and the stoops were crowded. McGann declined several invitations to "Come sit down." He took the kidding of the loungers with easy good-nature; the fact that he was not unpopular with the fair sex was demonstrated

by many a nudge and giggle as he passed. Soon, however, the greetings and giggles grew less frequent, and finally "the neighborhood" was left behind and he walked unnoticed and unknown.

It was thirsty weather, McGann decided, and before long he turned in at a swinging door. Here he cooled his throat with a glass of beer and drew the barkeeper into conversation. It was always easy for McGann to make friends; his red hair, snub nose, and frank manner, seemed to inspire confidence. The barkeeper, who admitted the name of Sikes, was soon persuaded to give his opinion upon the weather and the war, and then the talk drifted to more personal matters.

"Some dog," remarked the dispenser of liquid refreshment as he peered over the counter at McGann's companion.

The dog sat with his tongue lolling from his mouth and with reproachful eyes fixed on the Irishman. He had seen no cats.

"Want to sell him?" asked Mr. Sikes casually.

McGann's eyes narrowed; such words were music to his ears.

"What'll you gimme for him?" he said cautiously.

The barkeeper temporized. "Oh, I was on'y talkin',—what's his name?"

"'Bluff,'" said McGann, and as he spoke the word, his inspiration came. "I'll tell you how it is," he said. "He belongs to a friend of mine—a sick friend. 'Monk,' says my friend to me, 'I need money awful bad. Everything has gone except the old dog. Do you think you could sell him for me?' I said I'd try, but I ain't met up with anybody yet who'll give me more than ten dollars for him, and Bluff he ain't no ten dollar dog. No sir! Now I'm wonderin' if I couldn't raffle him off; I ought to be able to sell a lot of chances at a dollar. What d'you say?"

"Sounds good to me," agreed Mr. Sikes. "I wouldn't mind taking a chance myself, and there's some fellows back there playing pool that might like to have a look-in, too."

"Now see here, you don't know me," said McGann, with an engaging show of candour. "I tell you how we can fix it. I'll go back, and each fellow that wants to can take a number, and I'll put his name down. Then I'll go out and see how many other chaps I can find, and I'll tell 'em all to meet me here at, say—ten-thirty. Nobody need pay me a cent till then, so you can be sure I'm on the square. See?"

"First rate scheme," approved Mr. Sikes. "I guess the boss'll O. K. the idea, too; the fellows that lose will all want a drink to cheer them up, and the fellow that wins 'll sure want to celebrate. Put me down for two numbers, I'd like to win that dog."

McGann disposed of ten chances in the pool-room and then asked Sikes to direct him to places in the vicinity where he would be likely to get a favorable hearing. With every repetition the Irishman's story gained in pathos. Not only was Bluff's imaginary owner very sick, but his wife was an invalid, the rent was due, and there were five children. Bluff, it seemed, had a wonderfully extensive pedigree. No one, argued McGann, could afford to let this golden opportunity pass; the opportunity of contributing a dollar to a worthy cause and at the same time becoming the owner of such a dog.

In his campaign McGann was careful to keep well outside the boundaries of "the neighborhood;" for there both Duffy and his dog were known. Once, indeed, disaster threatened, when a prospective owner of Bluff examined him closely. "Well," said this individual, "if he ain't the spittin' image of E. P. Duffy's dog!"

"Say, I like you!" exclaimed McGann heartily. "You know a good dog when you see him. This is a brother of Mr. Duffy's pup. I know the fellow that raised 'em and he says this is the better of the two. You know what E. P. thinks of his!"

McGann sold thirty-two chances in all. It was a good-natured crowd that gathered in Mr. Sikes's pool-room to wait for the drawing of the lucky number. McGann stood at the door and collected the dollars as the men entered; the pile of coin and bills grew quite imposing. Sikes produced a small colored boy to drew the number, and there was a moment of tense excitement when the little black hand went into

the hat and emerged with a scrap of white paper.

McGann leaned forward to read. "Number One!" he announced in ringing tones.

"Great Day!" yelled Mr. Sikes. "I've gone and done it!"

McGann remained after the rest of the crowd had dispersed. He sat in a far corner of the room with Bluff between his knees and watched the barkeeper polish glasses.

Mr. Sikes was jubilant; it had been a record breaking evening, so far as drinks were concerned, and he was still grinning over his victory.

"The first thing I ever won in my life!" he said for the hundredth time. "I don't see how it happened."

"Well," said McGann, arising from his chair, "I'd better be stirrin' my stumps and go take Sam his money. I hope you'll be good to the old dog; I'll be around some time soon to see how he's gettin' along. Better tie him up; he'll want to follow me."

A bit of clothes-line was knotted to Bluff's collar and he was tied ignominiously to the leg of a table. McGann stooped and patted his head. "Good old dog," he said, and departed.

Outside the door the Irishman lit his pipe and leaned against a lamp-post for five minutes, contemplating the stars. He then emptied his pipe, assumed an air of deep dejection, and re-entered the café.

Mr. Sikes looked up with some astonishment. "Forget something?"

McGann shook his head gloomily. "No," he said. "I just couldn't do it."

"Do what?" demanded the barkeeper impatiently.

"I couldn't face those kids and tell them that I'd sold Bluff and that they'd never see him again. I've come to buy him back."

"Well of all the—"

"Don't rub it in," said McGann, "I know I'm a softy, but the kids just think the world of that dog and it ain't treatin' 'em right. Their pa'll get the thirty-two dollars all right; I'll pay for the dog out of my own pocket. What'll you take for him?"

"I don't know that I want to sell him at all."

"Now see here, Mr. Sikes. Those kids think the world of Bluff; they have grown up with him. You ain't going to be selfish and take him away from them, are you? You bought two chances in the raffle so you are out two dollars; I'll give you five dollars for him and you'll make three on the deal. How about it?"

"Humph! Awhile ago you was saying that he wasn't a ten dollar dog, and now you want me to sell him for three. I don't see it."

"This is different," argued McGann. "This is a case of charity. You know how it is with kids. I'm a poor man myself, but I'd rather go hungry than have those little fellows cry. Well I'll give you ten dollars for him then; that'll mean I'll have to go without my lunch for a couple of weeks, but I don't care. As man to man, now, Mr. Sikes, help me out." He peeled ten one-dollar bills from his fat roll and fluttered them enticingly before the barkeeper's doubtful eyes.

Mr. Sikes scratched his head. "As you said," he deliberated, "it's a question of charity."

"Think how happy they'll be when I take 'em thirty-two dollars *and* Bluff," urged McGann.

"All right," agreed Mr. Sikes gruffly, and be it said to his credit that he was really very reluctant to part with the dog.

"I like you, Sikes!" said McGann, with enthusiasm. "You've got a good heart. Here's your ten plunks. I've got to hike now, it's late."

The barkeeper moistened his thumb and counted the money. "Any time I can help you out, just let me know," he said. "Give my love to the kids!"

Bluff was untied from the table and shook himself thoroughly, to express his relief. He had been a little worried for a while, but had never quite lost faith in McGann. Evenings spent in that gentleman's company were always eventful.

After a few more words of friendly repartee, McGann once more left the café, and this time Bluff plodded at his heels. The streets were empty now, and the stoops deserted; McGann whistled as he walked, and several times he laughed out loud. He was in high spirits.

Mr. Duffy had returned and was in the act of undressing when he opened the door to the Irishman's heavy knock.

"Think I'd stolen your dog?" asked McGann.

Evidently Mr. Duffy was not in the best of humors. He dropped his shoe on the floor and muttered something unintelligible. Bluff jumped to the bed, turned around nine times, and sank into dreamless slumber.

McGann drew his roll of bills from his pocket and flourished it before his friend's astonished eyes.

"*I'm* goin' to take Mrs. Kester out to dinner; I'm goin' to take her to a two dollar show, and then I'm goin' to take her to a cabaret!" he gloated. "There ain't nothin' mean about me!"

"Well I'm dinged!" gasped Mr. Duffy.

"You are," agreed McGann. "And you'd be dingeder if you knew how I got the money. What's the use of workin' when the world's just full of fools itchin' to give their cash away?"

"Dry up," said Mr. Duffy, and climbed into bed. "I've been listening to Mrs. Kester talk about you all evening; now you come in and shoot off your face. Dry up and get out."

McGann dodged behind the door and escaped a well aimed shoe. He poked his head in for a parting word.

"Good-night, Mr. E. P. Duffy," he jeered. "The best thing about you is your dog. I like his name, and he's darn good company. I'll be 'round again tomorrow night to take him out for another little walk!"

Take a man with the temperament and frailty of Robert Louis Stevenson and another man with the animal instincts of Pancho Villa, place them together in the land of the hot tamale and you will have the characters and setting of THE CLOD, a story which we will serve up next month.

The fastidious person of the first part, contemplating murder and suicide, experiences some difficulty in finding an instrument of death appropriate to the personality of his victim, though he is able to select at once a poison suited to his own temperament.

AN HONEST THIEF

BY ALFRED WESTFALL

When thief meets thief, then comes the tug of wits. Let us present Mr. Sandhill Martin and Professor Holofernes Pike, two of the slickest crooks that ever coined money without setting up a private mint.

"THERE is only one honest profession left any more, and that's stealin'," remarked "Sandhill" Martin, ex-outlaw and reformed highway man. "But even that's becomin' corrupted now and carried on in such a legal manner that honest thieves are becomin' scarce."

"You sure there ain't some fallacy in your system of morals?" I inquired. "There can be legal stealin', I'll admit, but honest stealin' is as impossible as a wake without beer."

"Nevertheless, it's so," asserted Martin. "There are just two ways of unrighteously acquirin' another man's belongings. They're both stealin', but one 's honest; the other's dishonest."

"Are you prepared to make specifications?" I remarked.

"I am and I ought to know," discloses Sandhill. "I've been legally dishonestly robbed ever since I spent my first penny for arsenic colored candy. And for six years I was hunted all over seven states for honestly, and illegally, assimilatin' property claimed by my fellow motals. I suppose I've held up over two hundred people, but there ain't no man, livin' or dead, can say I ever robbed him dishonestly. I've always been fair and open. I gave people their choice of handin' over sordid gains to me or lettin' the inheritance-tax collector and their heirs quarrel over them.

"My case illustrates honest stealin'. Dishonest stealin' don't need no illustratin' in this day of legalized grafts. But to be particular, we'll take the case of Holofernes Pike,—Professor Holofernes Pike, as he denominates himself. He was the most dishonest thief I've ever fried bacon with. He was so saturated with dishonesty that he wasn't even honest about his dishonest methods of bein' dishonest.

"A coincidence brought me and Holofernes together. This was the desire that struck us both about the same time, to make our addresses unknown. Up to that time I hadn't committed any illegal violations of the law.

"I was punchin' cattle along the foothills. One day I rode over to the Lone Woman gold mine. There I discovered Elbert Elbertson, owner and operator. This same Elbert Elbertson had come into my home county back in Indiana two years before under the title of Prof. E. Haviland Southworth. He persuaded my poor widowed ma to mortgage her farm to invest in some sure-thing oil wells he was goin' to dig. Does he use this money in any such scheme to encroach on the business of the standard oil people? He does not. He comes out here, steals this mine from a poor lone woman, and uses my ma's money to start diggin'.

"Elbert Elbertson was makin' piles of money and becomin' high and mighty. People referred to him as one of the leadin' citizens of the community. It soft of cankered on my sense of justice to see this here woman pirate prosperin' on the proceeds of his legal graft while I was havin' a hard time bein' honest and earnin' a livin' at the same time. I decided that I was entitled to a little interest on this investment ma made with him and I commenced plannin' means of collectin'.

"I located a deserted prospector's cabin in an undiscovered draw in an inaccessible place back in an unknown part of the mountains. I knew a visitin' female relative couldn't find me there, let alone the

arms of the law. So I elected this abandoned bungalow my summer cottage and packed up three months' provisions. Then I rode over to the Lone Woman mine one afternoon and dropped into the private office of Mr. Elbert Elbertson. I presented my bill for collection. In fact, I shoved it right up under his nose. It was hard and cold and had a hole in the end of it. It caused Mr. Elbert Elbertson to become quite excited, but very docile. I left Elbert gagged and tied in a chair while I grabbed up eight thousand dollars worth of pay dirt and hiked back up in the hills to spend a few weeks in my summer cottage. Fame is only temporary, so I figured it would be easier for me to get out of the country after people had begun to forget about me.

"I stopped about a mile from my domicile and cached my spoils of war. Before I reached my cabin, I discovered smoke issuing from the chimney. At first I felt like I had stuck my foot out for a step in the dark and missed it. I decided to take a chance and rode up to see who was enjoyin' my hospitality and made the acquaintance of Professor Holofernes Pike. Holofernes was as kind and honest lookin' as a Pilgrim father and as bald-headed as a bartender. He appeared as free from guile as an old maid on leap year and lots more innocent and trustful. Bein' so far removed from the haunts of men and so lackin' in a desire for company, was credentials for both of us.

"Holofernes was an author in pursuit of local color. In fact, he preferred his color very local. He had just published a history of the county. Most of the male inhabitants of the community had paid from twenty-five to one hundred dollars to be pictured among the leadin' citizens and wrote up with appropriate remarks. It was a perfectly legal scheme, but when the natives seen the illustrations in that alleged work of literature, they got all het up. Every one of them prominent citizens laid aside his family duties and went out to seek a glimpse of this new knight of the pen. Some of them took along their ropes and shootin' irons. Holofernes heard them a-comin' and beat them into the brush by half a mile. Every time he stepped out from behind a tree or showed his head above a boulder, some one took a shot at him. He just had to keep goin' deeper into the mountains all the time. He was lost and about half starved when he came across my summer home. Findin' the bill of fare to his likin', he decided to linger about in the mountains until another best seller came out and the people quit talkin' about his contribution to American literature, or blotterature, as Jade Williams designated it.

"No two fellows was ever more calculated to get along better in solitude than me and Holofernes, because there was nothin' we agreed on. We always had something to dispute about and we argued continuously about everything from booze and ladies to music. Our ideas about things was entirely different, and most especially did we separate on this question of stealin'.

"Holofernes was the legalest, dishonestest, low-downest thief west of the Rocky Mountains. He never had an honest thought, that man. He was always contrivin' ways and means, and they was all mean ways, of beguilin' the poor people and widows to invest their last dollar in orange orchards in the Everglades or schemes to irrigate the Sahara Desert.

"'There ain't no use placin' yourself outside the pale of the law when there is so many legal ways of stealin',' argues Holofernes. 'People is always willin' to mortgage everything they've got and invest in any kind of a scheme, if you just promise them enough profit.'

"'Such degenerate methods of piracy ain't honorable,' I observes. 'They ain't honest. You're makin' your source of revenue think he ain't bein' robbed until he wakes up afterwards. Now I go up to a citizen and relieve him of his ornament and medium of exchange in a straight, practical way. He knows that he is bein' robbed.'

"'But it ain't legal,' Holofernes denies. 'You can be arrested for it.'

"'It's honest and self-respectin',' I sustains.

"'You represent labor,' speculates Holofernes. 'I am an example of the *entre-*

preneur, the organizer of industry, the man of brains. I've been a professor of phrenology, sold plated jewelry, and manufactured cocaine catarrh cures, but I've never deliberately stole no money from nobody. I've always given them something in return, if it wasn't nothin' more than the title to the coral in the Japanese Ocean. I've always been legal in all my transactions. You're still livin' in the stone age. You've never learned to apply anything but brute force to your work.'

"And so we argued back and forth for six weeks. During this time we was devastin' our food supply. Some days it appeared to me that that food went uncommon fast, but I didn't say nothin'. When it began to run low, we drew up plans for movin' to some distant center of industry where we could dispose of our unearned increment to some legalized graft, such as buckin' a loaded faro wheel or speculatin' in the stock market. I knew Holofernes had his sordid treasures laid away some place where he could get them quick, but I never made no inquiries about them. He had been eatin' salt, and everything else, at my table for about six weeks, and my rules of etiquette required me to respect his property, no matter how it had been acquired. But Holofernes wasn't encumbered with any such scruples. The more friendly he was with any one, the more certain you could be that he was plottin' against that which could be corrupted by moth and rust and removed by thieves.

"About two days before we was to depart, he opened up a conversation on the art of hypnotism.

"'There ain't no such thing. It's another one of them legal fakes,' I opinions.

"'Brother Martin,' he responds, 'it can't be denied. My eyes have seen it and my ears have heard it. It's the communication of mind with mind, the mastery of the higher forms of intelligence over the lower.'

"'You sound like the advertisement of a mind reader,' I insinuates. 'The next thing you will be tellin' me that I'm goin' on a long journey.'

"'Now let your mind remain open to the discoveries of modern science and I'll explain it to you,' he continues.

"'You can't convince me,' I admits, 'that those fellows that get up on the stage and bark like a chicken and hop like a toad ain't paid for it."

"'They are not,' he insists.

"'Then why do they do it?' I asserts.

"'They can't help it. They're under the power of hypnotism. They have to do whatever the hypnotizer tells them to.'

"'Then why don't they hop in when the hypnotizer turns them loose and shoot him up for havin' them make fools of themselves when they can't help themselves?'

"'They don't know nothing about it. They don't remember nothing that's happened when they come to. The mesmerizer works through their sub-conscious mind.'

"'How does he get this sub-conscious mind to actin'?' I requests.

"'It's the power of suggestion,' explains Holofernes, rollin' up his sleeves. 'The mesmerizer places the mesmerizee in a comfortable position,' he narrates, rollin' up my coat for a pillow and layin' my head back against the wall and puttin' my feet on the water pail. 'Then the experimenter causes the experimentee to gaze steadfastly at some object, say this diamond,' he continues, holdin' his paste diamond ring before me. 'Then the hypnotizer suggests sleep to the hypnotizee, gazin' straight into his eyes thus. Now you're gettin' drowsy already. Your eyelids is becomin' heavy.'

"It was right after dinner and I was sort of sleepy. I began to nod and I didn't seem to have any desire to keep from goin' to sleep. The last thing I remember Holofernes was still makin' passes before my eyes and tellin' me I was asleep.

"It was considerable later when I woke up. Holofernes was still standin' there makin' passes and kickin' the dirt from his shoes.

"'Been asleep, ain't you?' he sneers.

"'It 'pears that way,' I agrees with him for once. 'I must have et too much of that hoe-cake for dinner. How long have I been gone?'

"'Oh, just a few minutes,' orates the professor. He seemed quite certain about the time.

"'Peculiar the sun should travel so fast

in them few minutes,' I testifies.

"'We must have had dinner late,' he deduces, brushin' the dust off his pants.

"I noticed dirt on my own shoes and I felt sort of suspicious about that sleep, but I didn't say nothing. Holofernes don't refer to this hypnotism no more and seems anxious to avoid the subject whenever I tries to argue with him about it.

"The next day we get ready to leave.

"'I prognosticates I had better wend my way alone,' insinuates Holofernes. 'To be apprehended in the company of an escapin' outlaw might cast reflections on my character.'

"'You're right,' I stampedes. 'If any of them natives that bought this here book of yours ever seen me with you, they'd hang me sure.'

"So we parted company with proper affection. Holofernes headed northeast. I sneaked down the river about a mile, dug up my dust and pulled straight south. I thought things didn't look just right at first, but there was them buckskin bags, tied up just like I left them, so I loaded them into my saddle bags and got to goin'. I kept thinkin' about this hypnotism performance and noticin' that them bags felt sort of light. That night I opened up one of them. There was n't nothing in it but sand. Holofernes had made me dig up that dirt while I was hypnotized.

"When I saw how this fellow had robbed me, I was mad enough to invade a neutral nation. Most of all, I felt irritated up and down my backbone because he had n't lived up to his advertised methods of doin' evil. He had bragged how he never stole nothing except under false pretenses, until I had begun to believe him. He had been publishin' how he never took no man's property without givin' him something in return, if it wasn't nothing more than the title to a few bucketfuls of the Everglades. I started right back on his trail.

"I couldn't find any signs of Holofernes's travel very far beyond the cabin. I hunted around all that day, but I didn't locate no promisin' leads. Next mornin' early I noticed a little line of smoke comin' up from a draw back of the cabin. I sneaked up there about a mile and found Holofernes eatin' breakfast. It seemed that he had sneaked out about two weeks' provisions and cached them there, so that he could continue to dwell in peace and retirement after I had gone. He figured I wouldn't look for him so close to the startin' point.

"'Good mornin', Professor Holofernes Pike,' I says, exposin' that part of the equipment for national preparedness that I lugs around with me.

"'Good mornin', brother Martin,' he grins. 'Why all this threat to sever diplomatic relations?'

"'I'm givin' a little demonstration in hypnotism,' I affirms. 'As the mesmerizer, I'll ask the mesmerizee to gaze down the openin' in the end of this little object until he's willin' to swear the orifice is as big as the end of a railroad tunnel. The experimenter suggests that the experimentee place himself in a comfortable position. Now in this hypnotic trance I want to suggest to your sub-conscious mind that somewhere around here is a buried treasure and you're goin' to dig it up. You are completely under the influence of the operator of this piece of occult machinery and are powerless to disobey his slightest conjunction.'

"Holofernes tried to argue the question, but I commenced making hypnotic passes before his eyes with this little object he's got his attention glued on, and he came under my spell. He went to a spot down the stream not far from where I had cached my spoils and dug up three or four old tomato cans full of a fine yellow powder. He also uncovered a roll of bills as thick as one of the volumes of this here history of the county he had just published. I filled up my buckskin bags again and stuffed the bills into my saddle bags along with them.

"'Now,' I remarked, 'come out of this hypnotic state you ain't been in. You lyin' cross between a degenerate coyote and an unparented hound-dog, you're so dishonest that you've corrupted your own sense of moral rectitude. You don't even steal accordin' to your advertised methods of moral deflection. If you had lawfully acquired the fruits of my honest toil in some illegitimate way in agreement with

the methods of doin' business you've been a-boostin', you wouldn't have to be livin' up to any satisfaction-or-money-back agreement. But you spent six weeks provin' to me that you never honestly stole nothin'. Then just as I began to depend upon you, you change your business policy. You never even gave me a lithographed share of Mexican mining stock or some bogus counterfeit money in exchange. Now you had better continue to wend your way quite percipitously to the northward before I turn you over to your readin' public.'

"Right there," concluded Martin, "at the beginnin' of my career, I became convinced that it paid to be honest and I never robbed no man without acquaintin' him of the fact that I was not pretendin' to give him value received for his rolled gold watch and plugged dimes."

Another April feature: THE SUBSCRIBERS' SERIAL, *by Frank Vernon Stump.* A small town editor is cursed with a son who is cursed with ideas. From this darling's fertile brain comes the germ which eventually blossoms forth as the Subscribers' Serial in papa's paper. The writing of the serial is assigned to several prominent citizens, each furnishing one installment. The result is a plot which is sticky as well as thick.

THE POWER OF THE WIRELESS

BY DAVID S. LEVY

A man rushing to make a train before the guard closes the gate doesn't like to be stopped by some person who wishes to be helped from the gutter. That is part of the situation in this story, if we substitute ships for men and change the scenery a bit.

N the night of January 15, the big two-funneled steamer, Starlight, of the Pleiades Line, was speeding northward about three hundred miles off the Chilean coast. The Starlight had cleared from Valparaiso for —— But that was a secret; a secret that reposed with the ship's superiors.

"San Francisco," read the destination in the vessel's clearance papers. But the officers and wireless men knew better, albeit the few passengers remained shrouded in initial and blissful ignorance.

For it wasn't for nothing that the Starlight carried her huge consignment of steaming coal. And it wasn't for nothing that there had been hasty, last-hour conferences in Valparaiso between company agents, Captain Matthews, the first mate, and several Teutonic looking magnates. The purser, that smug, wise man of every ship, had known why he smiled, too, when he had hidden away in his safe a fortune in gold coin and bills that bore the Imperial Eagle of the House of Hohenzollern.

Likewise, it wasn't for nothing that the Starlight on the night of January 15 was some three hundred miles off the path of commerce. For it is not good strategy in war-time for hunted battle-fleets to plough the ordinary highways of the main. Much less is it good policy to attempt a coaling operation where British sea-monsters might come leaping up at any moment.

Down in the stoke-hole the men were working like demons infernal in the race for time. On the forward deck Captain Matthews paced like a tiger, the first officer close behind him. On the main deck everything was clear and ship-shape. In the lookout's perch there was a double watch; for the Starlight was engaged in desperate chances. The night was black; great clouds of smoke poured from the funnels; and the ship was speeding at an unprecedented rate.

Up in the wireless cabin at midnight, the two operators, Bob Kennedy and Joe Harmon, were sitting at a hand of cards. For two hours they had been playing intermittently. The telephone bell rang for the twentieth time. Harmon threw down his cards and answered it.

"It's from the Cap, Bob," he said, as he hung the receiver after a few moments' talk. "I guess we'd better stow the cards and clear for a busy night. We're getting hot on the trail now. Only a few more hours' steaming at the most, the captain says."

Kennedy grumbled. He picked up a cigar and looked reflectively at the cloud he conjured from it.

"Well, Joe," he drawled, "this business may be all right; but nix on this blockade and illegal running for me. It doesn't look good. I've got no feelings one way or the other for Dutchmen or Britishers; and I suppose it's all right for the owners to step in and grab a chance for a handsome freight when it's offered them; but it's risky, it's risky. Who knows when that British squadron will poke its muzzles over the sky-line and knock us to Davy Jones's safety vault at a moment's notice."

"I agree with you, Bob," answered the younger of the two men. "Far be it from me to doubt the Cap's wisdom or the owners' rights. But say, why don't they do the thing regular? There, for instance, are the passengers. They have no license on a ship like this. It's dangerous business

we're on, and it doesn't seem fair to them. They should have been put off at the last minute on some pretext."

"Correct," said Kennedy. "They get nothing except a few days' delay, without knowing anything about it till they reach port; and some possible punctures. We take the chances, but then, there's always the chance for a nice fat bonus at the end of the rainbow. However, let's get to work and tune up those instruments for the final splurge."

Harmon set to work with alacrity. Kennedy snapped on additional lights and looked out of the window into the blackness.

"What a deuce of a dark night it is," he said shiveringly, as he gazed up at the poles where the invisible antennæ stretched their slender shapes into the air, as though exhorting and begging of it a message from the Kaiser's fleet.

And surely enough, just at that moment the receiver began to speak. It spluttered and crashed uncertainly and stammeringly for a moment, this nomad of the air. And then it proceeded systematically with its articulate code message:

"HOLD YOUR COURSE STRAIGHT AHEAD, NOW," it read. "WAITING FOR YOU. EXPECT YOU IN FOUR HOURS AT MOST. VON GRENZ."

"Well," said Kennedy smiling. "It took the duffers more than an hour to answer that last message we sent them. But thank God, we're traveling straight now, and we'll soon be up to them. 'Phone it to the captain."

Down in the billowy stretches of the South Pacific Sea, that night of January 15, there wandered strange ships. Merchant ships there were, but these hugged the friendly coast. Out in the vastness of the eddying tides there were other vessels too. But not by the Northern Star did this brood steer those tides. They steered by the war-star Mars.

In those western waters, where the Starlight was rushing to her tryst, the sun a few hours before had set on castle-walls. Great, grim castle-walls they were; but within them, ship's holds they had for donjons; and steel bulwarks for stone parapets; and gun-casements for arrow-slits; and revolving turrets, war-painted, for square stone ones; and mighty rifles pointed steel noses hungrily and black against the red in the fading sky.

Two broods of these monsters had floated placidly on that sea. Two broods there floated still, but at goodly distances, chaser and chased, the shroud of night hid them from each other. On the decks of the smaller fleet they spoke anxiously in the language of far-away Berlin. On the others' decks they spoke the tongue of Nelson.

Through the darkness the British officers had listened jealously and watched jealously all night. Finally, before midnight, there came, entangled in the wireless meshes of the flagship, a hapless stray messenger of the air. A joyous gleam in the Admiral's eye, a moment's conference, a quick scurrying, a few orders, and the British fleet was off.

All were not war vessels, mighty defenders of sovereign lands, that fate had drawn together that night. Near the Chilean coast other vessels had sailed during the day. The Starlight had not sailed alone from Valparaiso thirty-six hours before. There, for example, was the fruit-liner Aurelius, which had weighed anchor almost simultaneously with the Starlight. And then there was the Jason and the Libertador.

Added to these were two or three gray tramps of the sea,—dark hulks, voyagers of every ocean; apparently never resting, ever wandering in strange places,—Arabs of the main,—mystic and mysterious, the slave of no man.

And then there was the Starlight's rival: the Hyrcania of the Hesperides Line, a sturdy vessel, newly built; bright, cheerfully accoutered, yet ominously atmosphered. Sailors of the salt are superstitious. The death that had attended the launching of the Hyrcania, three years before, had never been forgotten, and never been forgiven. Men did not like to sail her. They shook their heads.

It was the Hyrcania that sailed the day

before the Starlight from Valparaiso. She, too, was destined for the Golden Gate. Unlike the Starlight, however, she, with almost all the others, had been caught in a furious gale, and been blown dangerously near the rocky Chilean coast. On the Starlight they had wondered what had become of the Hyrcania in that gale.

The Starlight had been steaming steadily for half an hour since the midnight message from Von Grenz, of His Imperial Emperor's Fleet. On the bridge, Captain Matthews was talking with great satisfaction to Harper, the first mate, and with Loenhoe, one of the two German agents who had shipped, ostensibly as passengers, in reality, as supercargoes and advisers to the captain.

Loenhoe, polished, a man of the gilded council-chamber, keen, alert, rubbed his hands. Four more hours, and he would be with his battle-fleet; the coal and money delivered; his commission over; his worries ended.

"We are making straight ahead, Captain?" he asked Matthews.

Matthews nodded pleasantly.

"Straight ahead." The captain had an eye to the main chance. Now that the game was at its height, the fat prize within reach, his eyes gleamed with the zest of the sportsman approaching a goal well won.

"How much longer?" inquired Loenhoe.

"Four hours," said Matthews. "I believe that's right, isn't it, Harper?" He turned to the first mate.

"Just about, Captain," replied the officer. "That is, if Harmon and Kennedy up there in the wireless cabin have the straight goods on the longitude and latitude in that message. But then, you looked that up yourself. It shouldn't take more than four hours. The stokers are working like trench-diggers."

Up in the wireless cabin, Kennedy and Harmon had their instruments keyed for action. For half an hour after receiving Von Grenz's message no sign of life had issued from the machines.

Presently, however, they awakened into life. But this time the message was not from Von Grenz.

As the older man's more practised ear caught the import of the pale and hectic flashes and the stammering splutterings of the communication, his eyes bulged with astonishment. The instrument suddenly grew quiet.

"My God, Joe!" gasped Kennedy, pushing toward Harmon the message he had scrawled out on the blank. "Look at it! It's the old Hyrcania!"

Harmon, who had not caught the full meaning of the flashes and the splutterings, because of his preoccupation, gazed in bewilderment; but he now received clearly through his eyes what his ears had communicated incoherently.

The message read:

"S. O. S. SINKING BY THE HEAD: HYRCANIA."

The paper fluttered from Harmon's fingers. Both men stared at each other, speechless.

A second later they started violently. The instrument was again speaking. Kennedy strained over his table.

Almost as suddenly as it had begun, the machine ceased.

Kennedy pushed another transcription under his assistant's eyes. The characters inscribed were simple. They read:

"LAT. 120°, 42'."

While they stared, the machine spoke again:

"LONG. 35°, 22'," was the message.

Kennedy seized the transmitting key. Harmon distinguished the wire through his daze.

"MESSAGE RECEIVED. TELL US MORE."

Then the older man turned swiftly to his assistant.

"Joe," he commanded, "call up the captain. Tell him about it. Ask him to come up."

Harmon took the telephone receiver and called the bridge. A salutation rang in his ears.

"Hello," he said. "Is this the captain's bridge? Captain Matthew? This is Harmon in the wireless room. Captain, we need you at once. We've just got an S. O. S. from the Hyrcania. She's sinking by the head. Shall I come down?"

Captain Matthews was a man of few words. The only answer Harmon received was a vicious click as the receiver was jammed on the hook at the other end of the wire.

Two minutes later, the captain stepped hurriedly into the room.

"Tell me about this, Kennedy," he growled.

Mechanically, Kennedy pushed the two messages toward his chief, who snatched them up.

"Hmmm," he murmured, "Lat. 120°, Long. 35°, 22'. Why, they're only about fifty miles from us!" he said in surprise.

At that moment, the machine began to splutter once more. Kennedy scribbled as fast as the flashes echoed raucously in the stillness of the room.

When the silence fell again, he pushed a third sheet toward the captain. It read:

"S. O. S. IN GOD'S NAME HURRY. CROWD FULL STEAM. NO SHIP WITHIN 150 MILES. TWO HOURS HYRCANIA AT BOTTOM. S. O. S."

The captain frowned. His lips tightened curiously.

"Get some details, Kennedy," he ordered.

The phlegmatic veteran had no chance.

"ARE YOU COMING?" another message spluttered rapidly.

"The Devil! Tell them to keep up courage, Kennedy," said the captain. "I'll give you some instructions in a few minutes."

Matthews hurried out and made his way down and up to his bridge. Loenhoe and Carlson, the two Germans, greeted him wonderingly. They noted the captain's drawn face.

"What's the trouble?" asked Loenhoe.

Matthews detailed the news.

The two Germans stared blankly at each other and at Captain Matthews.

"The Hyrcania—of the Hesperides Line—sinking—going down—fifty miles away?" repeated Loenhoe jerkily.

Matthews nodded. His brow was knotted.

A gleam flashed into Loenhoe's eye and face. He anticipated the quick-witted Carlson by just an instant.

"The enemy," he cried, "the British—"

He had no need to say more. The captain said nothing; but his keen face showed he had already thought of what the two Germans were suspecting; that his mind had already analyzed that aspect; that he had already passed on to other phases of the problem. He looked at the two Germans and at the planking thoughtfully for a moment.

"Let us go up to the wireless cabin, gentlemen," he said, "and talk it over."

Led by the captain, the group entered the room. At a table in one corner sat Kennedy, calm, with sphinx face, pipe in mouth, bending over his instruments expectantly. He turned his kindly eyes, blue-grey, upon the entrants.

Harmon's lithe figure vibrated with the excitement of the occasion.

"Well, Kennedy," asked the captain, "anything new?"

"Nothing further, Captain."

"Let's have those messages you've got now."

Kennedy handed them over.

Together, the two Germans examined them eagerly.

"Well," began Loenhoe dubiously, "of course they look all right, but you know that old British trick—"

At this moment the machine began to splutter again.

In a moment, Kennedy handed over the latest message:

"IN GOD'S NAME," it ran, "ARE YOU COMING? SINKING FAST. PITY. QUICK!"

Captain Matthews's face grew troubled. Obviously a decision had to come and come at once.

"Gentlemen," he said, turning to his two companions, "I propose—"

"Not to risk everything by what may after all turn out to be just a cowardly ruse!" exclaimed Loenhoe, pleadingly. "What is one ship when an Empire is at stake! Not a word would I say to taking a chance at missing the fleet and performing an act of humanity under other circumstances. But here we are, perhaps surrounded by enemies on every side. It is madness. Here we are with a cargo, worth—a chapter in history! And yet we are to turn aside on a gamble! What becomes of our agreement, our contract?"

Loenhoe stopped, short of breath.

Carlson broke in:

"Don't forget," he said, "the conditions of our arrangement. The ship is virtually ours to command. That, however, we shall not press. But consider: here we are more than three hundred miles off the Chilean coast. What is any legitimate trader doing here? Of course, the chances are that the gale of yesterday night might have blown off its course the Hyrcania, your rival."

Captain Matthews shot a slightly ironic smile at Carlson. The last sentence, with its inverted word order, was worthy of Carlson's Navy reputation for sarcasm and adroitness.

"Gentlemen," he said quietly, "to me the situation is perfectly clear. Here is a shipload of people begging for their lives. The law of humanity is evident. What are we going to do? The lieutenant has pointed out the danger of a British ruse; but I don't think such a thing is possible. Why, we knew only at sunset this afternoon, that the British fleet was fully three hundred miles northwest of the German fleet, without the English knowing the latter's whereabouts, and hardly having a suspicion of our own existence."

Both Loenhoe and Carlson were struck with the reasoning.

"Is it possible, then," continued the captain, "that the British could have covered since sunset, not only the three hundred miles separating them from the fleet, but actually have gotten to the point mentioned in those despatches over there?"

"No, it's simply impossible; and we know for a fact that no other British men-of-war have been in these seas for months; or merchantmen, either. A few lone tramp steamers, always infesting these waters, are the only ships usually around."

Kennedy and Harmon, anxious as they had been for a moment, lest the captain heed the others' pleadings, were visibly pleased.

"That's the stuff, Bob," whispered Harmon to his senior.

"You bet, the Cap's there," nodded Kennedy, taking a satisfied pull at his pipe.

"Moreover," continued Matthews to the two German officers, "nothing could be better fixed anyhow. We positively would have to go out of our way not to rescue the Hyrcania. According to her figures, she's in almost exactly a straight line from our own present position to the rendezvous."

Nothing more was to be said. Loenhoe and Carlson, after looking amazed for a moment, speedily corroborated the captain's geography.

"Well," said Loenhoe finally, "if we must, we must. Let's have it over with as speedily as possible, and get to our regular work. It is bad business, though. It's bound to throw us back at least two or three hours. I'm not entirely satisfied; but let the admiral know."

The three men turned to go from the wireless cabin. As Matthews faced about, Kennedy bent over to catch another message which had just started to register.

"HOW LONG WILL YOU BE?" it read.

Kennedy looked at the captain.

He was not slow to act. He walked to the telephone.

"Hello," he said. "I want First Officer Harper. Hello, Harper? Turn all the reserve stokers out of the hammocks. Throw every shovelful of coal you can into the boilers; turn the wheel a trifle more to the northwest. Under full steam we'll get to the Hyrcania within two hours. I'll be with you in a moment."

The captain stepped to Kennedy and Harmon.

"You two stick close until we reach the Hyrcania. Get all the information you can, and 'phone me the details. You may tell them we'll be there within an hour and a half."

He left the room. Kennedy bent over the machine. It began to rattle once more.

"ARE YOU COMING?"

"YES," answered Kennedy. "KEEP YOUR COURAGE. WILL BE THERE IN 90 MINUTES. HOW DID IT HAPPEN?"

In a few minutes came the reply:

"IN GOD'S NAME HURRY. SHIP SINKING FAST. 400 ABOARD."

At this moment the first officer, Harper, stepped into the cabin.

"Hello, boys," he said cheerily; "there's

a deuce of a night's work cut out for us. And say, maybe there aren't two mad Germans down there on that bridge with the captain! I almost died keeping from laughing. You know they're both pretty good fellows, Carlson and Loenhoe. But mad! You ought to see them! Lucky you caught that message. What's the trouble with the old Hyrcania?"

"All we know," answered Harmon, "is that she's sinking fast. Bob just asked what the trouble was, but they're too excited to take notice."

"Well, try her again. We've got to know what the nature of the thing is—boiler, fire, or what not, to be prepared decently for the rescuing."

Kennedy repeated his original question on the wireless.

The answer came back:

"STEAM UP. YOU ARE ONLY—"

The phrase broke off suddenly.

Five minutes the men in the cabin waited breathlessly.

"Now I'll bet that damned fool has his machinery all tangled up," growled Kennedy finally, in disgust.

"Or maybe the old Hyrcania's gone and blowed up altogether," added Harmon dolefully.

The first officer stamped his foot with impatience.

"Oh well, let it go at that. If you hear any more from her let me know over the 'phone. We'll go right ahead with our preparations. Meantime, wire Admiral Von Grenz merely that we'll be with him about two hours later than we expected. Needn't tell him anything else. The captain says it'll only complicate matters. If you should want me, I'll be on the bridge with Matthews."

Harper left the cabin. Kennedy sat at his place near the machine, Harmon standing over him, and peering over his shoulder.

They gazed out of the cabin window and saw dimly the scurrying figures of the crew as they threw blankets and bedding and garments on the deck. By this time it was littered with all sorts of furnishings,—camp-chairs, steamer-chairs, cushions, garments of every variety, shoes, slippers, stretchers, rugs, and the like.

Every one of the score of passengers the steamer was carrying stood in the full glow of the electric light on the middle deck, gesticulating over the news that had brought them from their sleeping quarters. On the bridge, the operators could distinguish the forms of the captain, Harper, Loenhoe and Carlson, in addition to a couple of sailors.

The Starlight was by this time rushing forward with huge bounds under a full head of steam. Long, low and graceful she was; and capable of great speed. The smoke poured from her funnels in mountainous volumes. The waters dashed violently against her sides. The breeze, gentle all about her, whistled in the operators' ears, as the Starlight cut her swath through it and against it.

On the decks below, all was gradually put in order. The men were all in the places assigned them; lifeboats had been loosened; life-preservers had been piled conveniently near the davits. Coverings intended for the rescued were all assembled; and the passengers had contributed generously from their roomy wardrobes.

On the upper decks all was now repose, or repose saturated with repressed nervousness. Nothing more was to be done, save hold the Starlight to her arrow-like course.

Only below in the boiler rooms was there feverish activity. Here, the entire force of stokers stood in the furnace glare; perspiring, shoveling, cursing; arms and shoulders moving in steady reciprocal motions, obedient to the stern tenseness of purpose written on the faces of the meanest of them.

Out in the darkness, on the flagship of the German battle-fleet, Von Grenz ripped out a mighty oath, when he received Kennedy's message.

"Two hours!" he shouted. "The snails! What are they doing? Stopping to harpoon whales?"

His orders through his wireless operators to Loenhoe and Carlson and Matthews on the Starlight, however, were fruitless. Matthews gritted his teeth only the harder at Von Grenz's appeals to hurry, smiled through his iron-grey mustache at Loenhoe

and Carlson, and held resolutely to his path. After a few minutes, Loenhoe and Carlson relapsed into surly silence, and Von Grenz's wireless ceased to importune.

For more than an hour, the Starlight sped with her pulsing engines. Then, up in the wireless cabin, Kennedy, who had long since given up hope of communicating with the Hyrcania operators, spied in the far western distance a tiny dot of light.

"By God, Joe," he cried, "there's the old ship. She must still be above water. Quick, tell the captain we've sighted her!"

Harmon leaped across the room and gazed over his chief's shoulders into the darkness beyond.

"Sure enough," he cried, after looking through Kennedy's night-glass, "that must be it. We're anywhere within four miles of the place the duffer on board her gave us."

He sprang to the telephone and shouted the news to Captain Matthews, and was informed that the two lookouts had discovered it two minutes before.

The ship now began to slow up considerably, although it still ploughed through the waves at an appreciable speed. From their cabin, Kennedy and Harmon could see and hear the excitement which now broke out below. Sharp commands flew hither and thither. The passengers shouted, although this was in direct contravention of the order of the captain. The crew busied themselves with their final preparations.

Gradually the light first sighted grew more and more distinct. Then a dozen smaller lights appeared below it, as though shining from the ship's hull. Presently a swarm of lights became visible.

Kennedy began working his transmitting key. He received no reply from the ship ahead of him. The telephone bell rang. Captain Matthews wanted the operators to establish communication with the Hyrcania.

"I'm afraid you'll have to wait until you can use the megaphone on her, Captain," answered Harmon. "We've been doing our level best to raise them, but their apparatus must have got out of order."

The night was pitch black. Nowhere was there a rift in the sky to show the moon, the stars, or the lighter colored clouds. Although the fog had disappeared, the vessel ahead was enshrouded in an almost impenetrable veil. Gradually, however, as the Starlight slowed down near her, the operators could discern her general outlines.

"Just look at that list forward in her, Bob," cried Harmon, pointing to the vessel.

The ship now loomed up fairly close to them. Kennedy gazed earnestly at it.

"By George, I can't distinguish any list, but she sure does look like she's in pretty bad shape on her bow. Wonder what happened to our searchlight that we don't sweep her with it? There goes that 'phone again. You'd better answer it."

Harmon picked up the receiver.

"Hello, yes, this is Harmon. No, we haven't been able to communicate with them yet. What's that? Oh, all right. We'll be down in a jiffy."

"Bob," said Harmon, hanging up the receiver, "I guess you'd better close up your machine for a few minutes. Matthews says he's short of help. He's got three of his men in the cabin with the stewards, and four are down in the stoke-hole, tired with shovelling coal; so I guess we'd better go down.

"No objections here," said Kennedy. "I've been up here now for almost two days, and I'm getting tired. I'm glad to be in on the fire-works. We'll go down right away."

They left the cabin. As they reached the deck, they could hear Captain Matthews hail the derelict with his megaphone. They were now so close to the vessel, that, despite the darkness, they could discern at the ship's side, a miniature fleet of life-boats filled with passengers. Aboard there was great excitement. Through the gloom the forms of people running to and fro were vaguely discernible. Shouts of every kind came sporadically to the two men: shouts of thanksgiving, joy, prayers, singing and yelling.

They could not distinguish what Captain Matthews said to the rescued vessel through his megaphone; but they heard the latter say distinctly:

"Pick up the life-boats first. Put out your own boats afterwards."

A few sounds from Captain Matthews's megaphone reached them. He evidently assented to the other's plan, for after a few commands had been given on both vessels, the small life-boats began moving toward the Starlight.

Kennedy and Harmon reached the deck at last, and peered over the railing to watch the rescued come aboard. They were joined suddenly by Captain Matthews, First Officer Harper and Loenhoe and Carlson.

"Come on, boys," said the captain, "we'd better be going down to the main deck to receive them and direct their movements. Follow me."

Just as the little group reached the gangway, the sailors of the Starlight, led by one of their number, gave a shout of welcome as the survivors mounted the ladder, and came, one by one, upon the deck. The passengers and crew gathered eagerly about them. Then they came in groups of twos and threes until presently some forty men stood around the gangway.

Captain Matthews stepped forward, a half smile on his face to welcome them.

The two operators hung in the rear.

"Kennedy," said Harmon, "I always did know they had a pretty bum sort on that Hesperides Line and the Hyrcania. But what kind of a bunch of men is this? They look like foreigners. Where in hell are the women and children? It seems to be a case of men first here, and let the women and kids go hang."

"Right," growled Kennedy, a troubled look on his face. "I was just thinking the same thing myself. There's not a single female among them. Fine business this!"

As Matthews stepped forward to shake hands with the uniformed officer that seemed to be the leader of the boats, the latter, a huge, powerful man, accompanied by two others of like stature and physique, brushed up to him and said:

"That's a pretty sort of a wireless crew you have on this canal barge! Where are they?"

Kennedy and Harmon stepped forward simultaneously in amazement. Captain Matthews and the men about him drew back, open-mouthed, at this ungratefulness.

As Kennedy and Harmon stepped into the lantern light, the burly officer caught sight of the insignia on their caps.

"Ah, boys," he cried, "there are the wireless guys. Be sure to get them first."

Quick as a flash, he uncovered a revolver.

Before anybody could move, there was a crack. Kennedy leaped high into the air, a bullet through his heart.

A volley followed, and the youthful Harmon fell to the deck, riddled by half a dozen balls.

"The British, the British," cried Carlson, his face twisted like a madman, as a bullet struck him in the throat.

Before the dazed Starlight officers, crew and passengers realized what was going on, a volley of revolver shots broke out from the half a hundred men who stood massed near the gangway.

A searchlight at this moment broke from the darkness. It was from the "rescued" ship. It played on the huddled Starlight company.

Dimly Captain Matthews saw his mistake. Neither trader nor war-craft was this. It was "one of those lone tramp steamers, always infesting these waters,"—a rover of the main, an all too real fairy craft of fiction; one of those descendants of Morgan and Kidd; one of those causes that an incredulous modern day rarely considers in recording mournfully "a vessel lost at sea, and never heard from afterwards."

The giant leader of the highwaymen of the sea emptied his revolver into Captain Matthews and Harper. They fell across each other, overturning and extinguishing the lantern. His two immediate companions shot the second and third officers, killing them instantly.

Loenhoe had time and the wit to make a desperate accounting of four men with his quick-speaking revolver. His resistance was brave, but he, too, soon lay shattered on the deck. In five minutes all the officers and half the defenceless crew of the Starlight lay lifeless on the planks.

"Don't let a single one of them escape," sang out the giant. "Do you hear me, not a single one! Remember, now, passengers and all. Get the stokers, the cabin-boys, the cooks,—every damn mother's son

and daughter of them. Not a single one gets loose, or the whole jig is up when we get back to the States."

His companions obeyed with deadly swiftness. Within twenty minutes the Starlight had not a single living soul aboard. The passengers lay dead on the garments and coverings they had brought out to protect those for whom the Starlight had raced across the sea. The decks and boiler rooms were littered with dead.

In the purser's office the pirates had busied themselves well. They had had correct information on the Starlight. Their calculations had been accurate. The ship's safe yielded them more than three millions in coins, bills, bullion and jewels. The Starlight itself was slowly scuttling beneath the waves that rushed in through the rents in the bottom of the hull.

The pirate ship was now well under way; and as it drew off with its immense booty, an explosion burst the air terrifically. The sky flashed livid and lurid. The tremendous concussion reverberated. Timbers, masses of steel, fragments of bodies, flew through the air from out the volcano of fire. Then all grew dark again; it was the last of the brave, sturdy Starlight.

Far to the west, by one of those tricks of sound-wave flight, Von Grenz on his flagship heard the concussion.

In the northwest, the British fleet, which had been steaming furiously since midnight, heard it too. They wondered—after having overheard part of the midnight wireless conversation between the Starlight and its assassin—what it could mean. Still greater speed the British crowded in the effort to head off the Starlight and her coal in time.

British and German fleets arrived on the spot, and departed, within three hours of each other. They were too late. The greater tragedy had happened. Only a single spar floated to tell the Starlight's story. On it was a torn, gilt inscription: "STARLIGHT—WIRELESS CABIN."

The Black Cat Club

(*Continued from page 2*).

brutally, but with intense power and vigour of expression. I suppose that this is the first story of a new writer. If this is so, here is an excellent opportunity for someone to make a discovery."

The Fourth Contest comprises the stories in this issue (March); and all lists must be received at the office of THE BLACK CAT, Salem, Mass., before April 1st. Prizes will be awarded April 5th; and the result of the contest will be announced in the June BLACK CAT, issued May 15th.

A PRIZE OF $25 will be awarded to the author of the story which is selected as the best story of the month by the largest number of club members.

PRIZES OF $5 EACH will be awarded to the five members submitting the best criticisms.

A copy of THE BLACK CAT should be obtainable at any news stand, or it will be mailed to any address on receipt of ten cents. Members will find it to their advantage to become regular subscribers. The subscription price is one dollar per year. Any club member sending two yearly subscriptions will receive the magazine for one year free.

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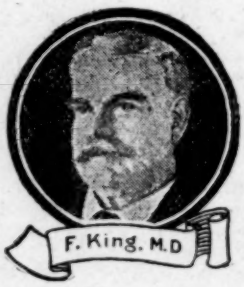
Extracts from some of the letters received are given below:



Dr. King, a New York physician and author, says: "There can be no vigorous iron men without iron.

Pallor means anaemia. Anaemia means iron deficiency. The skin of anaemic men and women is pale. The flesh flabby. The muscles lack tone, the brain fags and the memory fails and they often become weak, nervous, irritable, despondent and melancholy. When the iron goes from the blood of women, the roses go from their cheeks.

In the most common foods of America, the starches, sugars, table syrups, candies, polished rice, white bread, soda crackers, biscuits, macaroni, spaghetti, tapioca, sago, farina, degerminated cornmeal no longer is iron to be found. Refining processes have removed the iron of Mother Earth from these impoverished foods, and silly methods of home cookery, by throwing down the waste-pipe the water in which our vegetables are cooked is responsible for another grave iron loss.

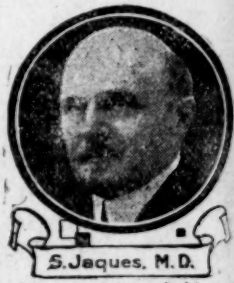
Therefore, if you wish to preserve your youthful vim and vigor to a ripe age, you must supply the iron deficiency in your food by using some form of organic iron, just as you would use salt when your food has not enough salt."

Dr. Sauer, a Boston physician who has studied both in this country and in great European Medical Institutions, says: "As I have said a hundred times over, organic iron is the greatest of all strength builders. If people would only throw away patent medicines and nauseous concoctions and take simple Nuxated Iron, I am convinced that the lives of thousands of persons might be saved, who now die every year from pneumonia, grippe, consumption, kidney, liver and heart troubles, etc. The real and true cause which started their diseases was nothing more nor less than a weakened condition brought on by lack of iron in the blood.

Not long ago a man came to me who was nearly half a century old and asked me to give him a preliminary examination for life insurance. I was astonished to find him with a blood pressure of a boy of 20 and as full of vigor, vim and vitality as a young man; in fact, a young man he really was, notwithstanding his age. The secret, he said, was taking iron—nuxated iron had filled him with renewed life. At 30 he was in bad health; at 46 he was careworn and nearly all in—now at 50, after taking nuxated iron, a miracle of vitality and his face beaming with the buoyancy of youth.

Iron is absolutely necessary to enable your blood to change food into living tissue. Without it, no matter how much or what you eat, your food merely passes through you without doing you any good. You don't get the strength out of it, and as a consequence you become weak, pale and sickly-looking, just like a plant trying to grow in a soil deficient in iron.

If you are not strong or well you owe it to yourself to make the following test: See how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next take two five grain tablets of ordinary nuxated iron three times per day after meals for two weeks. Then test your strength again and see how much you have gained. I have seen dozens of nervous, run-down people who were ailing all the while double their strength and endurance and entirely rid themselves of all symptoms of dyspepsia, liver and other troubles in from ten to fourteen days' time, simply by taking iron in the proper form. And this, after they had in some cases been doctoring for months without obtaining any benefit. But don't take the old forms of reduced iron, iron acetate or tincture of iron simply to save a few cents. The iron demanded by Mother Nature for the red coloring matter in the blood of her children is, alas! not that kind of iron. You must take iron in a form that can be easily absorbed and assimilated to do you any good, otherwise it may prove worse than useless. Many an athlete and prize-fighter has won the day simply because he knew the secret of great strength and endurance and filled his blood with iron before he went into the affray; while many another has gone down in inglorious defeat simply for the lack of iron."



Dr. Schuyler C. Jacques, another New York physician said: "I have never before given out any medical information or advice for publication, as I ordinarily do not believe in it. But in the case of Nuxated Iron I feel I would be remiss in my duty not to mention it. I have taken it myself and given it to my patients with most surprising and satisfactory results. And those who wish quickly to increase their strength, power and endurance will find it a most remarkable and wonderfully effective remedy."

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